

WINGS OF GREAT DESIRE



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WINGS OF GREAT DESIRE

BY JAMES GRAY

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

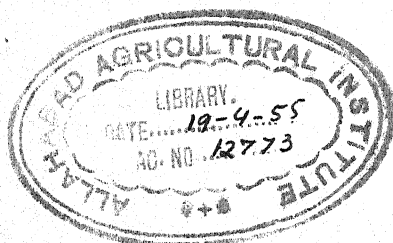
1938

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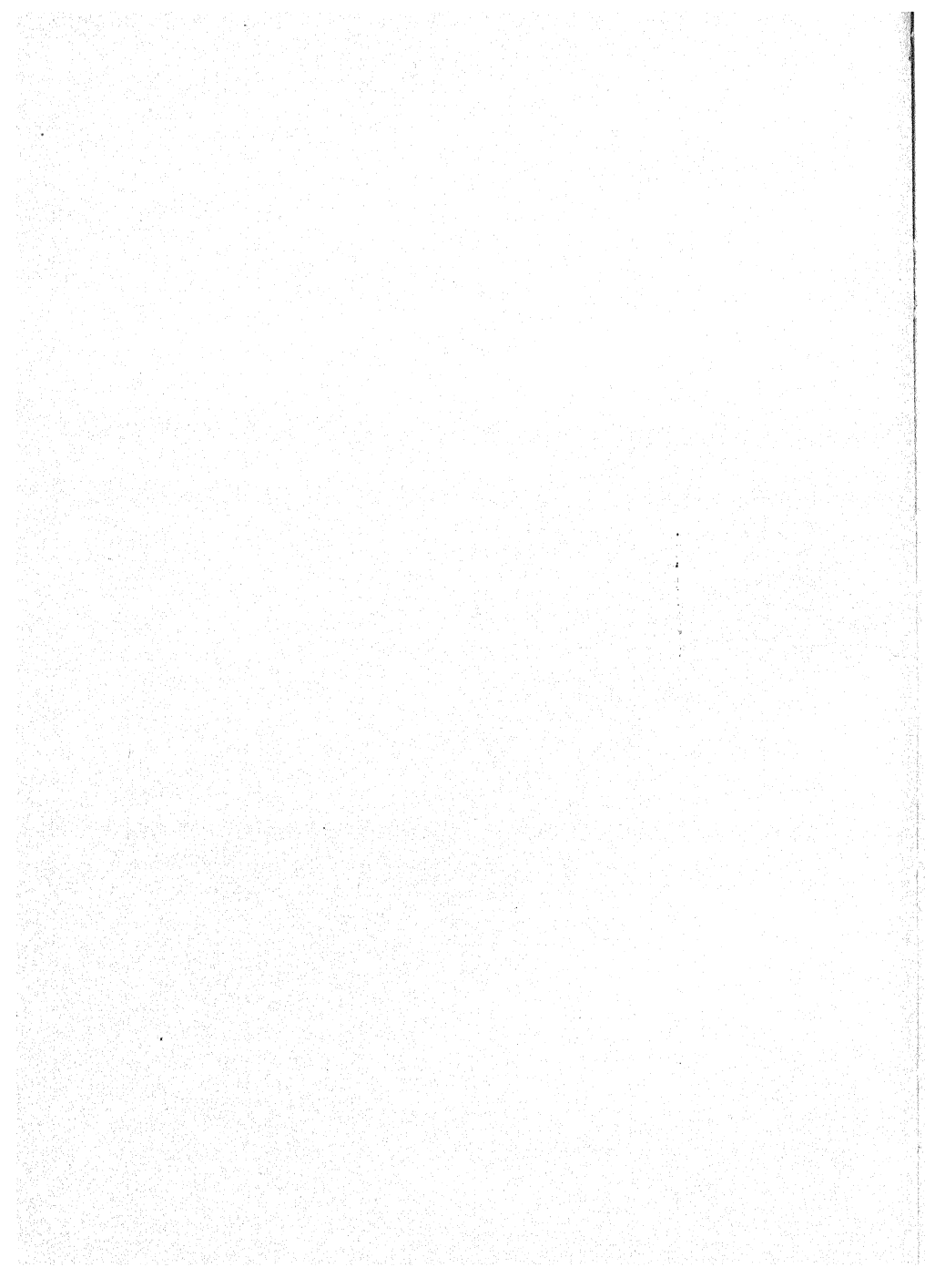
The central character of this novel has been drawn from life. That is true of absolutely no other figure in the book. I hope that this statement may be believed, not because I am unwilling to accept responsibility for what I have done, but because I wish to spare the suggestible the wholly unnecessary discomfort of fancying that they see resemblances.


Fleeting likenesses to people, living and dead, I suppose there may be. If such exist in the work, it is because a writer cannot reasonably be expected to avoid touching upon patterns that recur frequently in our human experience. Looking for plights and perplexities that may help him to dramatize his material, he may, on occasion, hit upon a parallel to an actual set of circumstances without being aware that he has done so. But even when he helps himself to a wisp of fact out of his own experience, he is not so presumptuous as to imagine that his intuition has instructed him in the whole truth, raying out of that fact. He improvises upon a suggestion, because that is part of his much-misunderstood, but, in my opinion, not entirely reprehensible business.

Certainly, it is no part of the business of a conscientious writer to gather together the unpleasant news about his friends. It is impossible, in a lifetime, to know more than two or three people well enough to attempt to do their portraits in fiction. To create, out of the stuff of general observation which lies in exciting confusion in the storehouse of everyone's mind, is much, much easier. It is what every writer does.

The frailties of the men and women in this book, I humbly take upon myself. They cannot justly be attributed to anyone else, because I imagined them. I hope, of course, that some recognizable truth is recorded in this account of what it is to live human life. But the characters, the careers, the crises are of my invention. I wish it were possible to make this statement under oath. I should gladly face the most solemn in all the literature of affirmation and repeat it.

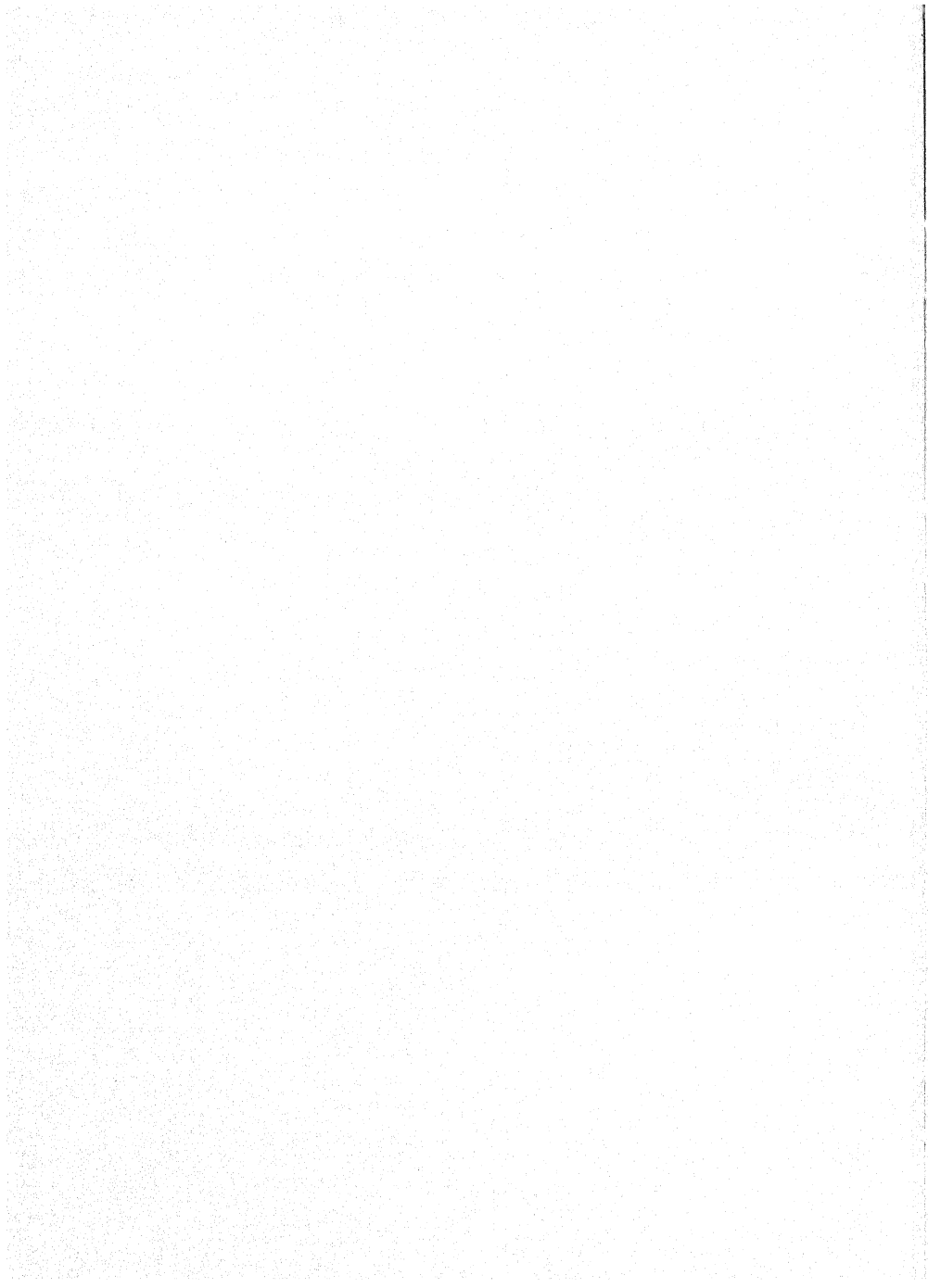
J. G.)





Kindle me to constant fire,
Lest the nail be but a nail,
Give me wings of great desire,
Lest I look within and fail. . . .

From Meredith's
"Song of Theodolinda"



BOOK I
MORNING

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(Hardy)

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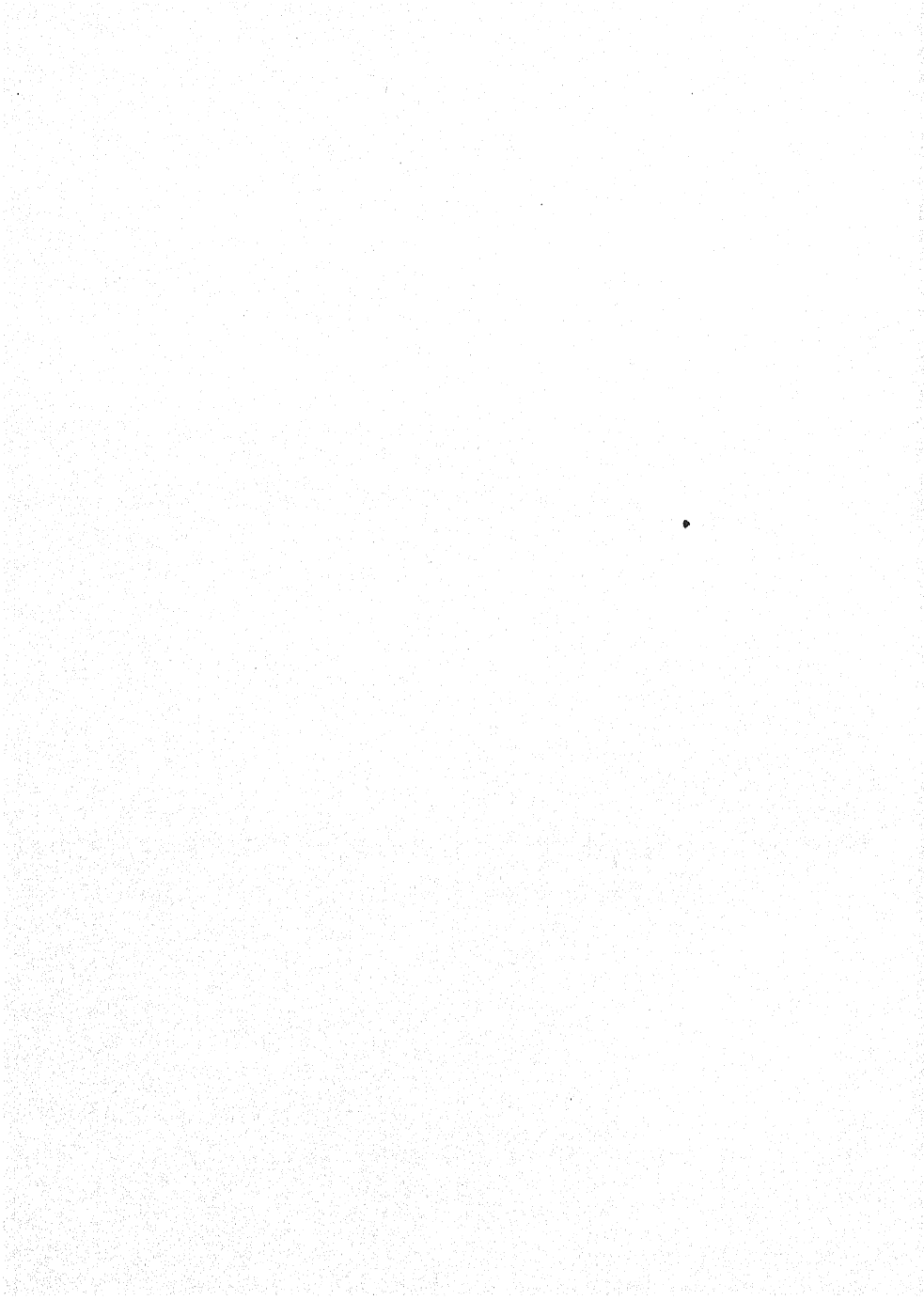
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I

MORNING

"We, who met the morning, sanguine-souled. . . ."



I

(March, 1872)

THE man who stood looking out across the vineyard bore on his stern, high forehead the signature of doubt. He had been praying a moment before. But he had broken off in the midst of one of the rounded phrases, conceived in imitation of the best style of the book of Common Prayer. Rising in disgust from his knees had been intended as no discourtesy to God. The disgust he felt was for himself and for the automatic insincerities which he had permitted his mind and his lips to shape. Prayers, inadequately addressed, were not likely to reach their destination. He had been degrading a holy office in the transparent effort to enchant himself into a resignation that as yet he had not been able to feel with deep sincerity.

It was impious to approach God until he had resolved the small turmoil of his own heart. Looking out into the green loveliness that never failed to give him peace, he murmured: "I shall look unto the hills from which cometh my strength and my salvation." |

From upstairs came the thin, piercing cry of the newborn child. Joel Winchester turned with a sigh and sat down at his desk. He must deny himself even the tiny comfort of aimless reverie until he had disciplined the rebel that had taken possession of his tense arms. He must reconcile himself to the protesting child that had been born to him less than an hour ago and whom he was in the gravest danger of resenting.

With a proud and demanding will Joel Winchester had wanted a son, and his desire had been denied. He could not quite manage to dissociate Naomi's contrary desire from his sense of having been betrayed. To the beauty and the grace that made his wife win love so easily, Naomi did not add that exacting sense of duty that Joel himself put before all other virtues. With her,

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honor was a pattern quite sound and whole at the center but it frayed out into ragged threads at the edge of her mind. He had heard her say that she was ill in order to avoid an obligation. There was even one time when he had been forced to question her word about expenditures made of the money allowed her for household accounts. In his heart, he was convinced that Naomi had given more than she admitted for a handsome bonnet presented to her beloved first child on a birthday. No doubt she had economized on food to make up for the extravagance. But he had refused to probe, hoping that complete belief in her integrity might be restored.

It was to this failing of his wife that Joel Winchester's mind irrationally returned as he thought of the fact that she had had her own way once more.

But he must not evade the truth that if she had been wilful, so had he. Perhaps his sin had been the greater, for it was his that was being punished by God's denial of his pride. Naomi had her second little girl to be a companion to the first. She would dress them alike and walk to church with these two copies of her own loveliness. Having daughters gave her an excuse to possess more of the ribbons and the feathers and the silks that were her childish delight. Through Margaret and this new child, Naomi meant to possess the earth itself even after she was dead. There was no spiritual strength in her, no deep yearning for the values that survive the grave.

It was not fantastic to believe that she would have denied him a son if she could. Naomi was afraid of him. He had known that from the very night when he had made her his wife. Turning to her in their bed to find the comfort for which he had longed, to still those dark urgencies that it was beyond his strength to discipline, he had heard her breath drawn in sharply. The protest had remained inarticulate. But waking later in the night, he had heard the sound of weeping and had seen Naomi's figure huddled in a chair, illuminated dimly in the moonlight. Mixed with the pity that tore his heart was a sense of wrong that he did not dare to express. They had become enemies in the night; wary, uncertain allies at all other hours. Naomi, to be

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sure, knew her duty well enough never to cross him, never to express her fears. They lived in an encompassing silence that never was exchanged for any hint of unruliness on Naomi's part or any betrayal of resentment on his own.

Rising slowly Joel Winchester went to the mirror that hung over the wash-stand behind the screen in a corner of his office. He wished to see what stubbornness of purpose it might be that had so alienated him from Naomi and that even now alienated him from God. He folded back the screen with a succession of brisk, orderly movements. During the five years of his marriage, he had fallen into a habit of doing exactly the same things at the same time each day. This was perhaps the first time that he had ever touched the screen except at the moment when he must wash his hands for lunch or again at the moment when he ended the day's routine. The exceptionalness of this impulse marked the occasion as significant, and he faced the half stranger in the glass with something like awe.

It was a tradition of which he was not ignorant that the Winchester line produced only handsome men. Contempt for the temptation to take pride in any circumstance so completely fortuitous had made him cultivate a certain unawareness of his physical self. It was enough to be scrupulously clean as to person and as to linen; enough, to know that clothes were of good stuff and kept whole. But he saw, now that he permitted himself to look closely, that he possessed all of the characteristics that were said to identify a Winchester unmistakably. He had the prominent, sharply cut nose that thrust itself forward like a weapon of offense; the deep set blue eyes beneath thick smooth brows; the thin lips and firm chin, lightly disguised under the already greying moustache and beard. And he saw also that there was something severe and hard about the whole look of him. It must be those traits that made Naomi withdraw from him and try to find a shelter for her alien ways in the houses of neighbors, in the church, anywhere but in her own home.

Yet he could no more change his look of severity than she could change hers of opulence and softness. Their ways accorded

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ill. So did their ideas of what things were to be held high in esteem.

An imperious rap sounded at the door. Before Joel Winchester could replace the screen, Dr. Huntley had strode, with his air of irritable preoccupation, into the room. But the doctor's habitual look of suffering from a half-suppressed fury at the entire world was subtly modified by some more immediate anxiety. Joel thought of Naomi, and all the resentment he had felt toward her was carried away on a rising tide of fear for her safety.

He grasped Dr. Huntley's arm.

"Naomi . . . ?" he began on a questioning note and could add no more.

"Your wife is well enough. She's dropped off into a little sleep. That woman-what's-her-name? is watching by her."

Dr. Huntley turned with the look of defiance, almost of dislike, that he always wore when his real dislike was for the thing he had to say.

"It's the child. . . . May not be able to keep her alive, you know. . . ."

Joel Winchester stood forcing the nails of his fingers into the palms of his hands. Once when he had been near sunstroke, he had disciplined himself with the same small torture. Saying over and over to himself: "I will not faint," he had crossed the vineyard and reached the house. A sickening recollection of that experience swept over him. Dr. Huntley's face seemed to swing before him like a lantern in a breeze. It was carried far away and then carried back in an impetuous rush.

He steadied himself by spreading his feet wider apart and wedging one under the edge of the desk. He had not known that the child's life was in danger. In his selfish preoccupation he had given her no thought at all. A sense of guilt, no less sickening than the dizzy fear of a moment before, almost defeated the effort to hold his body upright.

This might be the punishment that God had prepared for him. But the announcement of the birth had caught him unprepared. The child had come before its time, before he had had an opportunity to put away his wilful hopes and resign himself to the

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will of God. If he could but have another opportunity. . . . If God would only stay His hand until His blind and stumbling servant could. . . . Oh, if God would only stay His hand. . . .

"I must go back," he heard Dr. Huntley saying. "I told you the truth, Joel, because I thought you would want to arrange for the child to be baptised."

Of course . . . of course. . . . If he gave the child immediately into God's keeping, there might still be a chance. Perhaps God would entrust her once more to his care. Joel Winchester pushed past Dr. Huntley and hurried into the kitchen to ask Mrs. Gager to run for Dr. Spode in the next street. He watched her go with the lumbering eagerness that impels even the heaviest and stupidest woman when she has been made the proud messenger of death.

When he returned to his office, he found that Dr. Huntley had gone. Alone, he permitted himself to yield to an impulse of weakness. He dropped his head forward on arms thrust out across the desk.

Within him the words echoed and re-echoed through a vast silence: "Lord, I believe. Help Thou mine unbelief."

He did not know how long he had remained there. Presently he felt the propitiatory hand of Dr. Spode on his shoulder. Joel Winchester straightened himself and stood up. A vague resentment stirred in him that this man, that any man, should have seen him thus betrayed by his own guilt into an acknowledgment of weakness. His confessions were his own and belonged to no one but to God. But he saw immediately that Dr. Spode was ignorant of the real trouble in his heart. The clergyman merely beamed an automatic benevolence intended to soothe an automatic grief. Joel was left in his solitude even while he listened to Dr. Spode's expression of becoming sentiments.

Presently the others appeared. Dr. Huntley carried the baby. Behind him Mrs. Gager elbowed her way through the door, her face betraying the fear that some moment of this drama might be lost if she did not scramble quickly to a commanding position.

The baby was put into his arms. Joel looked down with a kind of terror. The little head looked wizened and withered; the

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flesh that had never come really alive looked already as though it were in an advanced stage of decay. But at the sound of the child's weak, rasping cry, his arms caught the body tighter. There was life here and here it must be kept. Life sacred to itself; life that needed no justification but its own being. To this flesh he owed a special obligation because, for a moment, his spirit had been churlish, unready to receive the gift of its sweetness. Now he was ready to keep this child warm with the warmth of his own body. Somehow he must manage to transfer the fierce pounding of his own pulses into this heart.

He could no longer remember why it had ever seemed important that he should have a son. Life was all that he wanted; the chance to renew himself after so many disappointments and so many perplexities. All of his faith in life must go into this child. Her mind must be enriched with all the learning in the world so that she might achieve what he had missed. Her heart must be filled with comfort and with peace, with demanding aspiration, too, so that she might help to remake the earth and fill it abundantly with the things that are valued in heaven. And she must have the happiness that he and Naomi had failed to create out of love.

Yes, this was his child. Margaret, the first born, he resigned wholly to Naomi. But this one was his own. Before her he would hold up the image of every good thing so that there would be room in her memory for nothing that was not beautiful, nothing that was not winged with aspiration. And in the end she must become the reflection of his faith.

"What do you name this child?" he heard Dr. Spode asking in his unctuously encouraging tones.

As though he merely echoed his thought, Joel answered: "Faith."

There was a moment's silence. Then Mrs. Gager, the ever ready custodian of respectability, pulled at his sleeve and whispered: "Faith what?"

"Only Faith. Nothing more," he said.

Presently the service was over. Still wrapped in his cloud of abstraction, Joel clung to the child. He climbed the stairs and

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entered the room where Naomi¹ lay sleeping. The exhaustion of her recent experience seemed to have drawn from her every bit of her capacity for adult emotion. Her face resting on the pillow in a cluster of dark curls looked like a child's. Joel wondered how he had ever happened to expect maturity of this naïve spirit. During all of their life together he had been making unreasonable demands.

It had been Naomi's mixture of ignorance and innocence that had first startled, shocked and fixed his attention upon her. When they had first met, a year before their marriage, he had immediately become aware of something in her that repelled him almost as strongly as it attracted him. They had talked one night about the War and he, who remembered Gettysburg, was horrified to hear how frivolously she had spoken of the dreadful duty of those years. Her lips gave service to the idea that it was necessary for the slaves to be freed. But it had distressed him to see that her eyes lighted with genuine pity only when she thought of how a gracious way of life on the plantations had been destroyed.

He had regarded what she said less seriously than he should. The memory of her eyes bright with eagerness remained after the thought of her harsh and heedless sentiments had been forgotten.

But beneath her childish mask there was a harsh and heedless mind from which those sentiments sprang. It was as well that he should know and accept the truth now, while he faced her, quietly and without resentment. He would try to make a companion of her no longer. She must perform her duties by him as before. That was only right. She would expect to do no less. But he would never again permit himself to be distressed by the silence in which they lived. Naomi had her compensations and he would find his own in this child of whom he had suddenly become so acutely, so troublingly, aware.

He signaled to the woman sitting by Naomi's bedside to take the child. As he went downstairs, he scarcely glanced at the Reverend Mr. Spode and Dr. Huntley talking together at

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the door. He passed by them and went into his office, closing the door.

There was no longer any doubt intervening between him and his desire to speak to God. The words poured through his mind, sped by the urgency of his pleading.

"Oh God, giver of every good and perfect gift, spare me the life of this child that I may shape and mold it in a form that may be pleasing in Thy sight. Help me to find the means of giving her such increase of knowledge that she may be a worthy and a valiant servant in Thy service. Lend me the strength to make her strong and the wisdom to make her wise so that her example may be worthy of Thy Son. Let her march bravely through the world publishing the tidings that comes from love of Thy goodness. Oh God, let this child live . . . let me have this child for my own. . . . A man must have something. . . ."

To his surprise he felt the warmth of tears upon his cheeks.

II

(May, 1880)

FAITH lay on the hillside out of view of the house. She had come here to examine her monstrous, frightening and somehow delightful secret. In all of her eight years no event had so threatened the firm foundation of her world. She had run away from the house nursing, all at once, a feeling of guilt, a consciousness of danger and a triumphant impression of immeasurable superiority.

Huddled here on the bank she discovered also, in the chaos of her emotion, a curious kind of pleasure. On a day when it had seemed unlikely that anything at all could happen, a great peril had been met. Her wide skirts tucked demurely about at the ankle, her fine gold hair spread loose around her face, she relished the protection that the vineyard and the warmth of its soil offered her in this shaking world.

Faith had not meant to listen at the door behind which Mamma was talking to Maggie and Kathie. But she had noticed dust along the carpet in the upper hall and had taken her own little broom and dust-pan, intending to repair Mrs. Gager's careless work before Mamma should see it and be grieved. Mamma was always grieved when Mrs. Gager did not clean well or the little girls tore their dresses. Faith had always thought it a splendid word and looked forward to the time when she should be old enough to look sad and serious like Mamma and be grieved over something.

As she worked her way, slowly and painstaking, down the hall she noticed, just outside the door of Papa's and Mamma's room, a crack between the boards through which a great streak of dirt was showing. It could not be brushed away and at last Faith had gone to her own room and found her lavender-headed pin. It had been stuck through the bouquet that Papa had brought

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her on her last birthday. Faith had treasured it ever since as an ornament, but it did not displease her, now, to be able to put it to a thoroughly useful purpose. She fell to her knees and began picking with concentrated attention at the dirt in the crack.

Mamma was behind the closed door. Faith was vaguely aware of her voice. Then she heard that Maggie and Kathie were in there, too. That had not seemed strange. For Mamma often had the other children with her. Neither of the other girls ever wanted to go with Papa on his drives into the country when he sold his cheeses. It was always Faith who went. She loved driving with Papa and Pegasus because Papa talked so beautifully all the time. Often she did not understand what Papa meant. But it seemed to matter very little. Just being with him was so nice! Faith loved what Papa loved. When one was as young as she, there was plenty of time for understanding what those things meant. It was enough to keep a sort of mental list and be ready to accept them when they came clear in her head. Often when she was driving with Papa, Faith had the notion that all of those things that Papa talked about in his beautiful words were rising toward her out of the horizon. Over that place where the road met the sky they would suddenly appear shining and clear. They would come toward her getting larger and larger and she would recognize them easily and know what they were.

But she had not gone driving with Papa today because he was not certain to come back in time for dinner. He might go as far as Medina Mills and stay the night. So Faith had wandered about alone, murmuring softly to herself the latest details of the endless improvisation on the story of Rumpelstiltskin that engaged all of her pleasant solitude.

And then suddenly, as she knelt at Mamma's door she became conscious of something so dreadful that the dust-pan into which she had been gathering the dirt fell from her hand. There could be no doubt about what she had heard. Mamma's most frightening voice, a voice that Faith remembered hearing only once or twice in all of her life, had been telling Maggie and Kathie that they must not on any account tell Papa *something*.

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If Papa knew he would be angry with Mamma and scold her. He would make Mamma cry.

That was all. Faith had put the words together in her mind—and really understood them—just before she dropped the dustpan. The noise had filled the hall. It must have reached Mamma's ears behind the door. There was nothing for Faith to do but run away. She must not be discovered and made to explain why she had been there on her knees.

As she ran out of the house and reached at last the protection of the vineyard, a flood of questions poured through her mind. What in the world could there be that Papa must not be told? Was Mamma ever bad so that she had to be scolded? Did grown people become angry at each other as they were sometimes at children? Most horrible thought of all, did grown people really cry?

Faith knew, of course, that terrible sins lay heavy on children's hearts. Kathie was always stealing things and then saying that she had not seen them. Maggie was years older. She lived in a different world. Faith did not know what Maggie might have done that was bad. But her own heart was not pure. Faith had never confessed to anyone about losing her gold thimble. Kathie had always envied her for owning something so fine. It had been hard to keep Kathie from discovering that the thimble was gone. Once Faith had even told a lie to Kathie about the sewing basket. She had left it at Legh Haddon's house, Faith said, when all the time it was hidden in a bureau drawer. That was to prevent Kathie from going through the basket looking for the thimble. Faith tried to believe that it was not quite as bad to lie to Kathie as it would have been to lie to Mamma. But there was not much comfort in thinking so. A lie was still a lie.

So how could Mamma be willing to deceive Papa about anything?

Then as the child nursed this dreadful knowledge close, it yielded up its secret. Mamma was afraid of Papa just as Maggie and Kathie were. Mamma was afraid of Papa, and Faith was not. She would tell Papa anything, even about the thimble if Mamma

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did not have to know, too. A subtle satisfaction crept guiltily into her mind. She had Papa to herself, in this, as she had him to herself on their long drives together. She alone of all the family was not afraid of him. A kind of frightening pride accompanied the thought, filling her mind with a delicious apprehension.

The arm that lay stretched out above her head was suddenly jerked hard. Crying with pain, she pulled herself free and sat up to face Kathie. Faith knew that it would be her younger sister. All the day's dismal routine of pinchings and pullings and petty abuse was associated with Kathie's round, mean face. The younger child grinned provocatively and made menacing gestures with her pudgy hands.

"What did you have to come up here for?" Faith screamed as she rubbed her aching arm.

More than her arm ached. There was a separate pain in her memory for every time that Kathie, pretending friendship had betrayed her into the revelation of some secret only to give it up to the ridicule of the other children on the block. And now Kathie had come upon her as Faith nursed the greatest secret of her life. She hated Kathie with a rage that was reënforced by a recognition of her own weakness. If she talked to her sister now she might be tempted to give up this most damaging secret of all. It was dreadful to see her standing there so mean, so sure that she could tease Faith into doing something of which a joke could be made.

"What did you have to come up here for?" she repeated.

Kathie only grinned. "Got as good a right here as you have. It's my mother's vineyard."

"It's my father's vineyard."

"My mother's . . . my mother's . . . my mother's," Kathie chanted.

And so she might go on for half an hour, Faith realized. Kathie loved saying the same thing over and over again, even if there were no sense at all to what she said. The monotonous sound rubbed at Faith's nerves like a tight ribbon. Her hands tightened in her lap as though, if they were not close clasped,

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they might tear wildly at something, even at Kathie's grinning face.

But presently a more immediate consideration seized upon the younger child's mind. It pushed out every other interest.

"Mamma sent me up to find you," she announced and let the swaggering confidence of the trusted lieutenant sound challengingly in her small voice. "Why did you leave your dust-pan in the hall?"

The realization that she had betrayed herself pinched at Faith's mind. She felt afraid in just the way that she did when Kathie would not let her out of bed in the morning but lay, plump and immovable, barring the way of escape while her fingers twitched and threatened. Mamma must know that she had been there in the hall listening to what she said. The sense of guilt grew large like a genie in a fairy story, darkening the world, shutting out the sight of any other thing.

"What are you blushing for?" Kathie demanded unable to conceal the delight she took in the effect her question had created.

"I'm not blushing. I just left the dust-pan there. That's all." A mean little inspiration came to her and she seized upon it in panic. "You're always leaving your things around. Mamma has to scold you all the time."

Kathie edged closer to Faith as they sat in the grass. Faith drew away. Being close to Kathie always suggested the imminence of some new and unpredictable discomfort. But Kathie held her with one hand while with the other she began untying the ribbon around Faith's head.

"You want to give me your ribbon, don't you, Faithie. Ribbons don't look well on you. Your hair's so thin and fine. Ribbons make you look more like a monkey than ever, don't they, Faith? Give it to me and I won't tell Mamma I found you. Mamma'll forget."

Faith snatched the ribbon from her head and threw it on the ground. "You can have it." She jumped to her feet and began running down the hill.

Behind she could hear Kathie singing:

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"Off' in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chains have bound me,
I wake up in the night
And think there's monkeys 'round me."

Tears almost blinded her as she plunged downhill. Kathie would never let her alone. Never! Always telling her she looked like a monkey. Shame rolled over her, wave on wave. Shame for the day when she had heard Mr. Spode saying to Mamma what pretty little girls Maggie and Kathie were and, standing in the hall, she had climbed to a chair to look in the glass and see if she, too, were pretty. Shame at the memory of Kathie's coming up behind her suddenly as she stood on tiptoe. Shame for words that she heard her sister shouting: "See the monkey. . . . See the monkey." She had tried to avoid looking at herself ever since. But Kathie wouldn't let her alone. When they were getting ready for bed at night, Kathie would come up behind her, pull her hair back tight and force her face up to the glass. "See the monkey. See the monkey."

The sound of the other child's voice had dropped away. Faith sat on the teeter-totter and fumbled in the pocket of her petticoat to find her handkerchief. But before she had dried her eyes, Kathie was there again, pulling the other end of the board to the ground. "Let's teeter," she urged, smiling with one of those sudden displays of friendliness to which Faith dared not fail to respond. To reject any suggestion from Kathie meant to lay up for herself another moment of discomfort. It was best to submit.

Kathie flung her plump person onto the teeter. The unequal balance sent Faith flying into the air, lifting her off the board so that she had to cling hard to keep from falling. "Kathie, don't. . ." she screamed in fright.

"Why not? I like to see the monkey's ears go slip-slap. You've got ears big enough for an elephant. They don't belong on a monkey."

Sturdy legs catapulted Kathie into the air, banging Faith hard

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onto the ground. Then immediately she plunged herself down again, jarring Faith's body as she was tossed above the board.

"Kathie, you mean thing . . . don't . . . I'll tell Mamma. . . ."

"Tell her . . . Tell her. . . . Mamma wouldn't care."

"I'll tell Papa, then."

"Go ahead and tell him. I don't care. You and Papa are just alike. Mamma said so."

The blood was beating hard in Faith's pulses, in her arms as they clung to the board, in her throat. She could feel a painful warmth in her cheeks. Why shouldn't she be like Papa? What was wrong with that? She loved Papa more than anyone, or anything in the world. Why should she be blamed for being like Papa? She was glad to be like him.

"Kathie, let me down this minute," she screamed.

"So that you can run and tell Papa? Papa's a mean, mean man. He scolds Mamma. He scolds everybody. Except you. I hate Papa. I hate him. I hate him."

The words thrilled Faith with a kind of awful ecstasy. She was not frightened any more, or even excited. It was Kathie who was excited now as she plunged up and down on the teeter, shouting her dreadful heresy. She did not see that a calm purpose had shaped itself in Faith's mind. Kathie must be punished for what she had said.

Shrewdly seizing her opportunity, Faith slid from the teeter and holding tight to the board let the kicking Kathie slowly to the ground. Then, with a grim resolution that did not question its righteousness, she walked around the saw horse and flung herself upon the startled younger child. Again and again, she struck her sister in a calculated frenzy of indignation. Kathie did not try to defend herself. The surprise of the attack left her with only enough energy to squirm and scream for help.

"Take back what you said," Faith commanded. "Take back what you said 'bout Papa."

Kathie's full round mouth continued to utter terrorized sounds. Mamma's voice from somewhere above them cried: "Children! Children!" But Faith did not stop until she heard another voice.

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This time it was Papa, speaking with an authority that Faith did not dare to defy. "Get up at once" was all he said.

They stood before him, side by side, flushed and dishevelled while he looked down out of his beautiful, stern eyes. For what seemed to Faith like a bleak forever he said nothing at all. And then: "What is the meaning of this?" he asked.

Faith felt Kathie's eyes upon her in a moment's uncertainty. Then in her familiar "begging" voice, she began:

"Faith and I were just playing. And then all of a sudden she let me fall off the teeter and began hitting me. I didn't do anything. . . . Nothing at all, Papa."

She said you were mean! She said she hated you!—The words took form in Faith's mind. But she could not speak them. Papa was beautiful. He was like the pictures of the Disciples on the Sunday School cards. She couldn't say that to Papa. It would be like saying that you hated God. You couldn't say such things. You just couldn't!

Papa was looking straight at her, waiting. "Is that true, Faith?" he asked at last. Still she couldn't answer. His eyes held hers. It hurt to be looked at so hard. She wanted to look away, to run away. But she wouldn't.

"Why did you hit Kathie?" Papa demanded.

And now it was clear that Kathie felt safe, safe as she always was, with Mamma protecting her.

"She did it just because she's mean, Papa. I didn't do a thing . . . not the least little, tiny thing."

"Be quiet, Kathie," Papa commanded. "I want you to tell me the truth, Faith."

Her hands tightened into fists; the nails dug into her palms. The bitterness of this betrayal filled her mind; the bitterness of being misjudged by Papa and not being able to explain; the bitterness of all the wicked things that had happened; all the lies and the meanness and she the one made to seem mean. But she wouldn't tell. . . . She wouldn't. . . .

Mamma was in the doorway now talking to Papa. "Joel, I saw it all from the upstairs window. Faith struck Kathie while they were playing. . . ."

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Mamma, too, was against her . . . defending Kathie . . . letting Papa believe that she, instead of Kathie, was the mean one.

"You understand that if you don't tell what happened, you'll have to be punished."

Well, let them punish her. Let them cut off her head if they liked. She wouldn't tell.

"I can give you only one more chance."

Faith looked at her father. He was beautiful. He was the most beautiful, the most wonderful person in the world. He could think what he liked. But she would not tell the awful thing she'd heard.

Turning away at last she walked toward the house, where Mamma stood, waiting to punish her.

"Faith," she heard Papa call once more. But she didn't stop. She walked past Mamma into the house.

III

(April, 1884)

THE buggy jogged along the road through the half-cool warmth of April. Faith rested in the curve of her father's arm. He held the reins lightly in his free hand and the three living creatures: horse and man and child, moved along together in a unity of confidence that rose from complete familiarity with the conditions of the journey.

Faith and her father had not spoken aloud for many minutes. Her mind had wandered free, touching and arranging neatly all the souvenirs of recent days. She thought of the Confirmation service and of Buford Waldron and of the poem that she had written and of the anemones she had picked while she waited to start with her father to Medina Mills. But mostly she thought of Buford because he was associated with all these other things. Buford had given her the book of Phoebe Cary's poems into which she would press her flowers. Buford was the only one who had seen her own poem. He had said that it was as noble as one of Phoebe Cary's own. With Buford she had talked a long time about the importance of joining the church. Faith had liked talking to him about such things better than she liked talking to Dr. Spode. The minister did not really want to answer her questions. His eyes kept wandering away, as though he were in a hurry to summon the next little girl. But Buford would talk as long as anyone liked about the excitement of being grown up and ready to serve Jesus. It was Buford who had said that Faith at twelve was probably as wise as anybody because that was the age at which Christ had been found preaching in the temple. The thought had made Faith gasp, at first. It sounded almost wrong to suggest that anyone would ever again be like Christ. But when she had nursed the thought secretly in bed (and refused to tell it to Kathie) it had come to be not only familiar,

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but delicious. Faith could see herself in the temple preaching to old men who marveled that one so young should be so wise. They would not know, of course, that she was wise because of all these times when she had been so close to Papa and he had talked to her about loving goodness and hating everything that was mean and cowardly and dishonest.

Or, instead of being a preacher, she might be a poet. She would sit in a high tower that opened on nothing but the stars. The stars had always seemed very close and friendly. Once she had dreamed that they marched across the heavens and when they paused at last it was to spell out her name. It made her smile a little uncomfortably to think how Kathie would tease her about such an idea. She had to laugh at it herself. But Buford thought her poem was good and Buford ought to know because his own mother was an authoress. She wrote lovely stories that Faith had read in the Sunday school paper. She signed them just "Violet." They were famous stories and Faith had known many of them almost by heart even before Mrs. Waldron had brought her son to live next door. And now Buford had promised to give her one of his mother's books and his mother was to write her name in it and a message to Faith. She had promised.

It was wonderful to know such a lady because she was as good as she was great. Buford had told Faith how many fine things his mother did; how many people wrote to her about their problems and how she helped them all. Buford loved his mother as much as Faith loved Papa and they had agreed that these two were the finest people in the world.

But tucked away in a secret place of Faith's mind was one souvenir so lovely that she hardly dared touch it at all. The very thought of it made her flush with pleasure and excitement. It was so incredibly wonderful a thing that Faith dreaded thinking about it for fear she would have to tell herself that it was not true. Buford had said that she was beautiful. It was better than that. He said she looked like a picture that he had seen in London when his mother had taken him there the summer before. The man who painted the picture had a rather disappointing name: Jones. Something else went with it, but Faith could not remem-

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ber quite what it was. Still he was a famous painter. Everyone knew about him. His pictures told the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. There wasn't any special one in the pictures that looked like Faith, Buford had said. They all did because they were tall and had fine gold hair and a sort of spiritual look. That was what made Buford think that they looked like Faith, because his mother had said that the ladies in the pictures had a spiritual look and then when she had seen Faith, she said that she had a spiritual look. Buford had told all this to Faith and surprised her so that she had not been able to eat her supper that night for thinking about it. All the things that Kathie had teased her about, an artist had painted into a picture that everyone thought beautiful. No longer would the word monkey affect her with a painful self-consciousness as though a personal reference were being made. For days she had felt light as though a stone that had long lain upon her chest had just been rolled away.

The pressure of her father's arm recalled Faith's attention. Papa was gazing down at her curiously. His deep-set eyes seemed capable of any miracle of insight. He might read the proud secret that she had hidden in her mind. Its splendor shivered in the intensity of that gaze. Papa did not think it was right to be proud. He had scolded Kathie for boasting about the new bathroom where water ran into the tub without being carried from the kitchen. There was not another one in all the town. But Papa said that it was vulgar to talk about such things. Surely he would think it worse still to be proud because Buford said that she looked like a picture. Faith flushed and dropped her eyes.

"What have you been thinking about, Faith?" Papa asked.

She opened her mouth to speak, but her lips felt dry. To fill the interval until she could use her voice she looked at Papa and smiled. His hand tightened upon hers, giving her confidence. He loved her even if he would not like some of the things that got into her mind. He would trust her and not make her tell as Kathie would have tried to do.

"It . . . it was just a crazy thing that Buford said."

"I thought you liked Buford."

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She was caught nicely now. Wishing to repudiate only the too desirable sweetness of what Buford had said, she was made to repudiate Buford himself. But that was wrong. Papa must be made to understand.

"I do like him . . . more than anybody." Still it wasn't right. "More than anybody that isn't in our family. I didn't mean that, only . . ."

"Only 'No excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness.' Is that it?"

Papa was teasing her as he sometimes did. She did not mind when Papa said things she did not understand, knowing that she would not understand them. The teasing enclosed love, like a package wrapped up in many layers of papers. Faith was patiently glad to tear away the coverings and find the familiar treasure underneath.

"I'm afraid I don't know quite what you mean, Papa."

And then it was as though he tore all the concealments away, impatient with his own joke. He caught Faith onto his lap and held her between his knees with the reins stretched round her body and his mouth lowered to the level of her ear.

"That was something said a long time ago by a thinker named Aristotle. When you go to college, you'll read him as I did, and what he says will make a great many things clear. When he said that every excellent soul is a little crazy, I think he meant that people who love good things love them so hard and fight for them so hard that they cannot be content to be sensible as ordinary people are. They want the best that the world has to offer, and they are not satisfied with the easy ways of living. They cannot just sit by and ignore the meanness and the cruelty in order to save themselves trouble. They are the people who make demands, who preach and even scold. They dream better things than can ever be fulfilled, and they insist on people's trying to fulfill their dreams. The excellent souls are never happy, never pleased with small, quick pleasures. They sacrifice themselves and all their ease for something by which they may never benefit. But they have the best of life. It is better to dream disturbingly than to sleep too well."

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A great joy filled Faith's heart. This was one of those moments when no fear lifted its barbed restrictions against the free expression of any thought. She knew a little of what Papa meant and Papa would be glad to hear what she had already learned.

"Buford isn't happy, Papa. He likes to read poems and people make fun of him for liking to read."

Her thought wandered for a moment. She had meant to say that it was Kathie who made fun of Buford for liking to read. But Kathie did not belong here, with her and Papa. They were not talking about how hard it was to sleep in the same bed with someone you could not help fearing. They were talking about something more important than that. It was about the whole world and the way that good things had to be fought for against bad.

"Do you think Buford is an excellent soul?"

Papa's arms clasped tight around her.

"If Buford loves books, he loves learning. And that is next to loving goodness. Because the two go together. They can't be separated. Anyone who loves learning will get as close to excellence as it is possible to come. You must study hard, Faith, all your life. You must never let any opportunity pass to know all that it is possible to know, because that is the only way to make your life something better than the life of a tree or a stone or one of those anemones in your hands. If you press those flowers in your book, you'll find them later with flat, withered petals and hardly any color at all. That is what happens to people who live without thinking. But if you take into yourself all the best that has ever been thought or felt or dreamed, you'll possess a richness that nothing can ever destroy. And maybe you'll live forever in some fine work of your own. Learning and goodness are the only things that matter."

This was better than talking to Dr. Spode about Confirmation. It was better even than talking to Buford about Phoebe Cary. She must remember as much of what Papa said as she possibly could. Buford would be interested to hear it. He and Faith had often talked of going to college together and learning everything there was to learn. Buford's mother thought it was a good plan.

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And now Papa had given his approval, too. The years seemed to stretch before Faith in a long, and wholly pleasant, vista each containing a special shrine in which to worship wisdom.

She continued to think of how many things there were to share as she sat waiting while Papa went into the store at Medina Mills. With Mrs. Waldron, she could share all the excitement of her trips to far-off places; with Buford, the reading of poetry and now that she had discovered how it was done, the writing of it, too; with Papa these drives, these talks. There were times at home when she had to cry because Kathie was so hateful and Mamma became grieved so often over their quarrels. But away from home almost everything was exciting. She pressed the flowers in her hands and began thinking of a poem that would contain what Papa had been saying about how anemones would wither, but goodness lasted forever.

The lines refused to come out even, and her attention began to wander. Her eye fell on the curious figure of a man who seemed not to be able to walk straight. His head seemed to be heavier than his legs. It kept pulling him backward or toward the side. He moved cautiously as you did when you were stepping into cold water and weren't sure that you wanted to; but his feet did not come down at all as they should. Watching him was almost like watching a marionette show when they took the theater part away and showed you how the strings were pulled.

Faith watched him with amusement as he came nearer and nearer in his wavering progress. She could see his face at last and that, too, was all funny as though it were the face of a marionette. She was not frightened until suddenly he grasped at the buggy to steady himself and fell against her. He made strange sounds as he stood there. Faith could not understand what he was trying to say. She wanted to climb down and run away. But the buggy was always left in her charge when Papa went into a store. It would be wrong to run away. Pegasus might run away, too. And then Papa wouldn't know where to find either of them.

She sat staring at the huddled form beside her, not daring to cry out for fear that Pegasus might be frightened.

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"Go away," she found breath to whisper at last. "Man, go away, immediately, please."

Speaking, she realized, had been a mistake. For instead of going away, the man reached out an arm and flung it around her shoulder. It was impossible to control her terror any longer. "Papa," she screamed, "Papa!"

But when he came, his anger was almost more terrible than her own fright had been. He caught the man by the shoulders and threw him violently to the ground. The huddled body lay there without moving. Then there was a dreadful sound and without opening his eyes the man was sick all over his clothes. Papa climbed into the buggy and drove in silence to the park. There he stopped and, still without a word, took Faith into his arms.

She had not known till then whether or not she shared his terrible anger. In his arms she permitted herself to cry, more from relief than from fright.

"There! There!" Papa consoled her. She had never been so close to him before. His arms held her till the pressure hurt. But she was glad to be hurt, glad of anything that brought her so close to Papa. There was something different about his affection now from any time that he had ever expressed it before, different and better. When she glanced up to strengthen their alliance still more by meeting Papa's eyes, she saw that there were tears on his cheeks. And that somehow was wonderful, too. Papa was altogether hers, for a moment.

Then suddenly he put her down on the seat beside him and said briskly: "We must go back home."

It was a disappointment to have all the strange difference over and be treated by Papa exactly as always. She wanted, now, to talk about the incident, to ask questions and let the excitement linger.

"Who was that man, Papa? What did he want?"

Papa hesitated. "Just a poor unfortunate creature who'd had too much to drink," he said at last.

So that was drunkenness. Faith had read about it in the Bible. David was drunk when he danced before the court. And his

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wife despised him in her heart. The words had always excited her. And now she understood why they should have had so powerful an effect. Faith despised the man she had seen because he let himself be sick all over his clothes. But mixed with her contempt was a strange excitement, too, at having learned something about which Kathie did not know.

"Why do people drink too much, Papa?"

"Because they're weak. Because they have no respect for themselves."

Before he had finished his sentence, a stern look came into his eyes. It was the expression Faith had seen when he had to punish any of his children. Was he going to punish the man who drank too much? she wondered.

But when he spoke it was to say something which Faith did not understand at all. He spoke not to her but to himself, looking out across the fields and seeming no longer to be aware that she was there.

"Yes, I must sell the vineyard."

She must not cry, Faith told herself. She loved the vineyard as Papa himself loved it. There on the hillside she had sat many times alone. Lately she had sat there with Buford. It was her own, very private place, a refuge from everything that she disliked, the setting of everything that she most enjoyed. But it was Papa's vineyard and what he did was always right.

It would be strange to have a right there no longer, perhaps to have a fence shutting her out. Faith sat trying to imagine what it would be like in the smaller world from which that part had been cut off. She thought of herself running toward the vineyard and then stopping; turning back; sitting with her book and tablet of paper in some other place.

Papa's arm was around her.

"I know how you hate to give it up, Faith. I love it more than any place on earth. But I sell the grapes that are grown there. And the grapes are made into the wine that makes men drunk. If I profit by what degrades other men, I am degraded myself."

But someone else will own the grapes! Someone else will sell them!—The protest slipped into her mind, like a snake slipping

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through the grass. She rejected it with contempt. That was the sort of sensible thought that Papa scorned. An excellent soul could not feel that way.

A sort of exultation ran through her at the thought of losing the vineyard. She was conscious of making a sacrifice to the idea of goodness. That was better than anything; better even than lying on the warm earth of the vineyard, better than watching sunlight through the leaves of her favorite trees.

IV

(July, 1888)

MARGARET WINCHESTER sat before her mirror smoothing the lustrous dark curls around her face. "Yes, you are . . . you really are . . .," she murmured aloud to herself, her eyes flashing back an agreeable acknowledgment of the unstated fact. There was no need to complete the thought. Everyone in Meadville would have expressed it for her. "The Belle of Room Fourteen" all the boys and girls in high school had called her. Even the girls did not try to contest her supremacy. There had been a perfect outburst of intellectuality among those who were determined to excel in something. But Margaret, who had escaped from awful slavery to that sinister old man Virgil only by staying late and coaching with Professor McKinstry, did not care. Let Legh Haddon write her brother letters in perfect Latin if that gave her such a lot of satisfaction. Margaret could make up for whatever deficiencies of brain power she might have by letting John Haddon slip his hand into her muff coming home from a party. He trembled every time their fingers touched. Poor old John!

Such a darling, clumsy thing he was! He couldn't enter a room without scuffing up the rug and knocking over a chair. Once when she had asked him to get the stereopticon from the what-not, he had pulled the whole thing down from the wall and broken Kathie's picture of Niagara under glass. John had been so unhappy that he had gone home almost immediately afterwards, and Margaret could imagine him hitting his head against the wall outside his house in sheer humiliation. He had done that once when he had given the wrong answer in a geometry examination though he knew the correct one perfectly well.

It was delicious to have John so helplessly in love with her.

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Probably it was wrong of her to torture him so by repeating the perfectly mad things that Mr. Simpson said. John was jealous of Mr. Simpson. And, heaven knew, he might very well be. There never had been anyone as handsome as Mr. Simpson. He would be a perfect Apollo if it weren't for his red hair. You couldn't quite imagine Apollo with red hair. Still, even that did not keep him from being very distinguished-looking. Being born in England seemed to make a tremendous difference in a man's poise and self-confidence. Mr. Simpson was excitingly different from the boys in Meadville. He was a little older, of course. And he had finished his law course. Margaret wondered sometimes how he could have been willing to become an American citizen when his uncle in England was a Lord, right next to being royalty. But Mr. Simpson just laughed when she asked him about it and said he wanted to stay because American girls were much prettier than any he had ever seen in Manchester.

Margaret put a last lingering touch to her hair and stood up to survey herself at full length. It was wonderful to be eighteen! wonderful to be through with the dusty smell of the high school! wonderful to be dressed like a woman! most wonderful of all to be going downstairs, in a moment, to help Mamma give tea to Mr. Simpson. "Give tea" was the way he said it. Margaret turned the words over in her mind, savoring their superiority to the dull way that Meadville expressed itself. Innocently pleased with herself, she started downstairs to help put the tea things out. But just as she reached the door, it opened and Mamma came in.

Mamma looked lovely in black with a lavender ribbon around her throat and that little white cap on her head. She dressed as the mother of a full-grown daughter should but really she didn't look a day older than Margaret herself. Her face was a perfect oval, and there wasn't a wrinkle anywhere, except when she frowned as she was doing now.

"I don't know what I shall do with those children," Mamma complained crossing the room to the window. "They brought Buford and John home with them. They're out there on the lawn. And I did want you to have Mr. Simpson all to yourself this afternoon."

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Margaret could not restrain a little laugh of pleasure. John had come to see her. She could give him one of those little twinges, that it was so pleasant to administer, simply by going down to say to him that she was sorry but it wasn't convenient to see him today. John's face would color and his big hands would begin to fumble and grope as though he were looking for a door through which he could escape from humiliation. Oh, it was mean to treat him like that! But it had to be done anyway. Margaret had promised Mr. Simpson that they should be quite alone with Mamma so that they could really talk. She could make it up to John easily some other time. Already she was looking forward to the pleasure of healing a hurt that had not yet been given. That was what made life so wonderful and exciting. There were people all around you, loving you; and you could make them happy or sad just as you liked. And if you made them sad you could make them happy again afterward. It was just too, too delicious to be alive; to be young and beautiful!

"Don't worry about John, Mamma. I can take care of him."

Margaret slipped an arm around her mother's waist which was as slender and pleasant to hold as she was sure her own must be. But Mamma wasn't to be soothed.

"It's all Faith's fault. She runs around after John in a way that I can't understand any child of mine doing. It isn't ladylike."

"Oh Mamma, no."

Margaret was amused at the very idea of getting excited over a queer little thing like Faith. John wasn't any more aware of that child than he might be of a Latin grammar. The two of them and Buford Waldron had many strange little interests together. They were forever running into Papa's library to look up something or find a book of poetry. But Margaret knew perfectly well that John couldn't have told the color of Faith's eyes. No more could anyone else really. They were sunk so far in her head that no one with any sense would dare look to see. But it wasn't fair to pretend that Faith was trying to be a coquette. Tra! la! la! Faith would not know how to begin trying to be one.

"I don't think John minds being with Faith," she said aloud. "It's probably Buford he really likes to be with, because Buford's

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so clever. But he's too afraid of boys to care to be with John alone. That's why they both let Faith go about with them."

"I do wish she weren't so queer," Mamma protested and drew aside the curtain to get a better view of the group on the lawn.

Kathie was sprawled on the ground eating an apple. John and Buford were beside her, each sitting with his knees drawn up and his hands clasped round them. Faith was sitting primly on the garden bench, her hands folded in her lap and talking, talking, talking. Faith never stopped talking when she was with those boys. It was funny: she never talked in the house. But probably she talked to Papa on those drives they were forever taking. Though what in the world anyone dared say to Papa, Margaret couldn't imagine. She would liefer be spanked even now at eighteen, a young lady, than have to spend five minutes with Papa. But whatever Faith said must be out of a pretty good book because both John and Buford were listening attentively. They waved Kathie away when she tried to tickle their necks with blades of grass. That was unladylike of Kathie, if Margaret knew anything about it. But Mamma never criticised Kathie except to say that life would take away her high spirits only too soon. All that talk! What did Faith imagine that it amounted to? Margaret knew better ways of amusing boys than talking. Still she hoped she knew what it was to be a lady.

An inexpressibly amusing thought struck Margaret as she looked down on Faith sitting there so solemnly. "Do you know, Mamma, Faith looks exactly like the pictures of Julius Caesar in my Latin book. Look at her and see if she doesn't."

"Margaret!" Mamma pretended to be scandalized. But she wasn't really. You could see her dear eyes crinkling into lines of amusement. "It's that long, thin nose, just like her father's. Oh dear, I do think it's too bad of those boys to make Faith think they like her. Because, of course, she'll never marry. We have to make up our minds to that right now."

Mamma always took Margaret into her confidence about everything that had to do with the family. That was delicious, too. It made Margaret feel old and superior, a part of Mamma herself. Or maybe it was that Mamma was becoming a part of her, now

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that Margaret, on her own initiative, was beginning to claim the earth. Parts of it anyway, like the corner that belonged to Mr. Simpson.

They turned away from the window together. "Run down and send poor John away now, dear, before Mr. Simpson comes. I should be so grieved if that clumsy boy were to come in while we are having tea."

"He's a frightfully distinguished man, isn't he, Mamma. Mr. Simpson, I mean."

"Why shouldn't he be? He's the inheritor of an old world culture. Sometimes I wish we'd never broken away from England." Mamma sighed as she sat down on the window seat and indulged in one of those cozy moments of confession that Margaret treasured. "Once when I was looking up your genealogy—on the Tyndale, not the Winchester, side—I wrote to an aunt in Vermont to learn if we were descended from a Tyndale who fought in the Revolution. Aunt Orpha wrote back: 'It's quite true that you are descended from that Captain Tyndale, though why you should want to trace your ancestry back to a man who was disloyal to his King is more than I can understand.' It struck me forcibly, very forcibly indeed."

It would be nice, Margaret thought, still to belong to a country that had such a wonderful tradition as England. All those old castles and fine estates and things.

But Mamma wasn't thinking of that any more. "I think Mr. Simpson must be very rich," she was saying. "He dresses in such exquisite taste. And he has hired the finest horses in the livery stable for the summer. There isn't a young man in Meadville that cuts the figure he does." She rose briskly. "Yes, run down and see to John now, dear."

The group on the lawn did not notice Margaret as she approached. John was talking, but he stopped short in the midst of a sentence, when he saw her coming, and scrambled to his feet. Buford got up, more slowly, with a grace that Margaret almost envied. Such smooth, flowing movements hardly seemed appropriate to a boy. Buford probably imitated his mother. Mrs. Waldron always managed to look as though she were sitting for

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a portrait when she came to call. She had a way of stretching her arms out along the sides of the chair and dropping her hands gracefully. Margaret had tried the posture before the mirror. But somehow it didn't look right. And yet Buford was able to do it, though he was only Kathie's age, surely not more than fourteen. Yes, he was a lovely looking creature, almost like a picture by Gainsborough, not of a boy but of a girl.

Margaret stood uneasily among the others not knowing, now that she was here, quite how she meant to dismiss John. Faith's eyes were on her, solemnly, patiently. She looked like a school teacher waiting for a mischievous pupil to explain a fault. It irritated Margaret to be put at a disadvantage. It irritated her also to have Kathie pulling at the hem of her skirt.

"What are you children planning to do?" she asked feeling that the question lacked the tone of authority she had meant it to have.

"Oh, they'll never do anything but talk," Kathie scolded. "I've been trying to make them play tennis or something."

"Kathie hates us," Buford laughed. "But not quite enough to leave us alone."

"Oh you're perfectly horrid. I want to do something."

There was an awkward pause during which Margaret felt as much an outsider as Kathie. The others made no effort to conceal their resentment of Kathie. They wouldn't dare to be so obvious about cold shouldering an older person. Still Margaret felt unwanted. It was a strange, new sensation. Impulsively she turned to John, confident that she could reassert her supremacy simply with a smile that would reduce him to a state of delighted, hopeful confusion. But there was a veiled, withdrawn look in his eyes and when confusion finally rose up in them, it was of a sort that Margaret did not understand.

"Oh, I forgot," he said at last. "We met that chap Simpson on the street a few moments ago. He asked us to tell you that he would be a few minutes late. He had an important message from his father, and he had to answer it right away. But it will be only a very short time. . . ."

The sentence trailed off into a vague hint of apology. It was

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maddening that John should stand there explaining and justifying Mr. Simpson. He didn't seem to care at all that she was going to be with someone not himself. In a kind of panic, roused by unfamiliar emotions, Margaret wanted to defy Mamma, to ask John to come in. It no longer mattered if Mr. Simpson were annoyed. John mustn't slip away from her. He mustn't.

"If you won't play tennis, can't we go out on the lake, at least?" Kathie's petulant voice had cut through the communication Margaret was trying to establish with John. And then it was Faith's cool voice further confusing the clear issue of Margaret's unchallenged right to John.

"Buford and I are going to quiz John on his German just as soon as we can persuade you to go and play with your dolls. We have to do it, Kathie, so that John won't have to bother with German when he goes back to college in the Fall."

Margaret turned away. She was angry now. Let him go then if his old German was so important to him. He probably knew it from A to Z already and just liked to show off before Faith and Buford. Faith liked showing off, too. A frightful blue stocking at sixteen and so pleased with herself! Well, let them all go, then. Margaret had other things to think about. Things that had to do with being a grown up person in a grown up world. There was Mr. Simpson's carriage coming up the drive now. She must be composed when she met him. Let those children go and play with their intellectual toys. Ridiculous, they all were. They didn't know what being alive was.

She hurried up the back-stairs to take one more look at her hair and smooth away the traces of irritation. She heard Mamma's voice and Mr. Simpson's talking together. Mr. Simpson had a rich baritone. He sounded almost as though he were singing when he spoke. He laughed a great deal and it was a nice laugh. He was a man, Margaret suddenly realized, and John was just a boy. It was silly to think about John at all. All those years in college before he would have finished his law. She wouldn't think of him any more.

When she went into the parlor at last, Mr. Simpson rose and made a sweeping, ceremonious gesture. "My lady," he said, draw-

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ing the second word out as though it contained three syllables. Margaret thought with amusement that the words should have been set to music.

Mr. Simpson's high color, his bold eyes, and his look of solidity made him at once a frightening and an enormously attractive person. Margaret felt almost wicked to be noticing such things about him. But you couldn't help noticing differences, and Mr. Simpson was so different from John. John's eyes were worried and distracted. Sometimes they looked at you very penetratingly, but then they would waver away. It wasn't like the steady confident gaze that Mr. Simpson gave Margaret as he waited for her to sit down. And John's shoulders, though they were wide, drooped and had to be pulled together with a kind of convulsion when he wished to appear dignified and at ease.

There was a steady flow of small talk whenever Mr. Simpson was in the room. He knew how to make everyone comfortable. Just to be saluted, as she had been when she entered the room, made Margaret feel gracious and graceful. Mr. Simpson paid Mamma compliments which you realized were compliments only after you had thought about what he said for several minutes. That made everything pleasant, too, because Mamma smiled and liked it so much.

"I've been saying to Madame Winchester"—he paused over the title to emphasize its playfulness and at the same time to underscore its essential reverence—"how I shall hate to go away into the wilds. I'm afraid that there are not many places in this country where a man can be sure of finding life conducted with such soft-footed elegance as . . ."

He lifted a hand and made another sweeping gesture as though to indicate that, though it would be unmannerly to say more explicitly what he meant, he could not refrain from hinting at a very special kind of gratitude.

Mamma made a gentle sound of protest. "But, Mr. Simpson, I'm sure that in a great city like Chicago you will discover many people who are able to improve on our poor show of hospitality."

"Chicago!" Margaret heard a little echo of fear in her own voice. "You are not going away to Chicago?"

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"Yes, Miss Margaret, I am and very soon, I'm afraid."

It was somehow very dismal to think of his going. Everyone was slipping away from her. She would be left alone, with no one to call on her, no one to take her to parties. She would be alone. She would become an old maid just as Mamma had said Faith would be. Was she no better than Faith that everyone should leave her?

Mamma rose and Mr. Simpson crossed the room, as though at a prearranged signal, to open the door for her.

"I'll just see if I can help Mrs. Gager with tea."

"Let me go, Mamma." The thought of being alone with Mr. Simpson was frightening. Mamma had always been with them before. It would be strange to be alone. Not like being with John who was so young. "Mr. Simpson would rather talk to you, I'm sure."

Mr. Simpson beamed. "I've always said that if there were no daughters at Palazzo Winchester, there would still be a great attraction."

"I'll be only a moment," Mamma said firmly and left them.

But Mamma was gone much more than a moment. Mr. Simpson, smiling blandly, began to explain the circumstances that had delayed him. It had been a cruel disappointment to be late because every instant with Miss Margaret was a treasure that he valued as much as life itself. But he had had a message from his father. There was an opening with a law firm in Chicago. Mr. Simpson was obliged to decide immediately whether or not he wished to take it. Margaret must help him decide. In fact he had her mother's permission to tell her. . . .

With a sudden comprehension, that was very like an illness, Margaret realized that Mr. Simpson was going to propose marriage to her. She listened to his words no longer. She was not sure that she wanted to hear them. How could you be sure? How was it possible to be sure . . . ?

V

(April, 1889)

FAITH did not know how to explain her feeling that the house had become as alien as an unlighted cave. It was close and oppressive. Among familiar objects she groped her way as though she were blind to them. Upon no prearranged course of action could she fix her mind. Her attention wandered, and every purpose frayed out into inactivity.

It was her fear that enclosed her in chill, stony walls. She could put her hand out and touch her fear, dank and close. The silence was almost tangible, too. It seemed to hang down about her like a frosty stalactite in her cave. She had walked for hours in an effort to escape from the sense of insecurity that the house gave her. But when she had walked the length of the town, the sense of insecurity overtook her and plagued her worse than before. She had to know what was going on in the room upstairs. To be away from home was a worse torment than to be in it.

Yet no one else seemed to think that Papa was very sick. He had come home from his trip that spring day, two weeks ago, with a severe cold and Dr. Huntley had sent him to bed. Papa had been quite cheerful at first and Faith had hurried home from school each day, delighting in the thought that there were many things she could do to make his convalescence pleasant. She had read to him from his favorite books: Emerson's Essays and Plutarch's Lives.

But there had come a moment when he seemed no longer able to fix his mind on what she read. Behind the barrier of his dignity, she caught glimpses of unfamiliar traits. Papa was as near to being irritable as it was possible for him to be. He complained that the bedclothes lay heavy on his legs. He liked nothing that he was given to eat. After each of these protests a look of deep chagrin would cross his face and he would stammer

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an apology. The look was more touching than the words. To Faith they revealed his sense of being betrayed from within by weakness that he could not master.

She saw her father with the special kind of pity roused by the sight of a country engaged in civil war. It was as though his body had been invaded by a force alien and antagonistic to his own spirit. His authority was no longer complete. His face was made to express a petulance that it had never worn before, and his lips spoke complaints that he would never have been willing to utter.

Today he had seemed much worse than ever. But Mamma did not think so. When Faith had urged her to ask Dr. Huntley to come in before his regular afternoon visit, Mamma had worn her look of patience, strained almost to the point of giving way, and said that since they were dependent on Dr. Huntley's judgment they could not do better than to trust it.

It seemed to Faith that she could no longer endure this anxiety alone. She had taken her distress to Margaret as the only one likely to assume any part of the burden. But Margaret, who had always lived in a different world, a gallant world almost like that of the fairy stories where there was a ball forever in progress, had passed quite beyond Faith's reach with her engagement to Mr. Simpson. It made her a superior being almost like Mamma herself. Margaret was no less conscious of the difference and was unwilling to have her authority as a grown woman challenged by a child. Still Faith's insatiable need of reassurance had cried out to Margaret, risking the slight that was almost sure to follow.

"How do you think Papa looks today?"

"Why, very well, Faith dear. Much brighter than yesterday, I'm sure."

A flame of resentment leaped high in Faith's mind. Margaret looked into Papa's room once a day and then only to be able to tell herself that she had done her duty. She saw nothing because she did not want to see. If it were Mamma who were sick, she would be anxious enough. When Mamma was grieved and felt the approach of a headache, Margaret put cold napkins on her forehead and flew up and downstairs with a dedicated air

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as though she fancied herself to be Florence Nightingale. But Papa could lie upstairs and . . . Why, it was true, Margaret would not be much concerned if Papa were to die!

The word startled her into a new panic. Even in her private thoughts she had not dared to use it before. But her irritation at Margaret had pulled it from beneath the layer upon layer of pretense under which she had tried to hide it from herself. It was horribly true, Papa might die. He was sicker than anyone knew or was willing to know.

"Oh, Margaret, I'm afraid. . . . I think he's much, much worse."

Standing there in the hall only a dozen steps from Papa's door, Margaret could think of nothing but her own prestige. The lovely soft oval of her face seemed to shrink and tighten with distaste. "Well," she said threateningly, "tell me I lie."

The unreasonableness of the response made Faith forget her real anxiety. She was trapped in a maze of illogic. Any conversation with Margaret led into such an impasse as this. Faith often felt as though she must run, wild and screaming, when Margaret reduced an issue to this sort of personal quarrel. What, she wondered, would John Haddon say to her at a moment like this? And suddenly she found herself longing for John. He would find some reasonable hope to give her, some confidence that would be based in logic.

Margaret did not matter any more. The very thought of John was better than anything that Margaret, who was blind because she was determined to be blind, could give her.

"I don't suppose either of us really knows whether Papa's worse or better. It's merely a matter of opinion."

But Margaret had begun to take a petulant pleasure in the contest. She barred Faith's way toward the stairs. "You asked my opinion and when I gave it you told me I lied. I expect an apology."

That was so easy to give. An apology that was not torn raw and bleeding out of a sense of guilt, but rather was offered with contempt for the one who exacted it: that no sensible person

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would withhold. "I'm sorry, Margaret," she said. Finding the way open to her now, she went downstairs.

No, Margaret didn't matter, she thought, as she sat in Papa's office. She was unhappy about her own affairs. There was something about Mr. Simpson which Faith did not understand. He had left Chicago. His letter said that the firm of old-fogy lawyers with whom he had been placed by his father was more dead than alive. He was striking out for himself in a new place. When he and Margaret were married, they would live in a small city in Wisconsin. Margaret did not hear from Mr. Simpson often. It was of him that she was thinking, not of Papa.

The distances between people were terrible and frightening. Margaret was frightened by all the miles that lay between her and Mr. Simpson, just as Faith was frightened by the distance that unfamiliar circumstance had put between herself and Papa. That sort of separation was the worst of all. Still, she was close enough to both John and Buford, though one was at Cornell and the other at Harvard. . . . She began to regret the silly game that she had been playing with John. When he had complained of not hearing from her, she had sent him three blank sheets of paper, explaining, in an attached note, that, on the accompanying pages he would find all the thoughts that she had had of him since their last meeting. He had retaliated by writing a long letter and then deliberately pouring a whole bottle of ink over the pages to make them indecipherable. She had taxed her ingenuity to find a proper revenge. Her next letter, she tore into small bits, sending the scraps with the explanation that the pages had fallen by accident into a meat grinder.

In that deliberately destroyed letter she had told him, quite casually, of Papa's illness. Now, as a result of her impudence, John did not even know how much she stood in need of his help. She took a sheet of paper from the drawer of Papa's desk and began to write to John in German. They had agreed to increase the interest of their letters by making each communication a test of erudition. It would distract her to have to express her most intimate sentiments in a language associated only with the scholarship.

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When she had written only a page, the door opened and Mamma came in.

"Oh here you are, Faith. I'm just going to the postoffice with Margaret to see if she has a letter from the West."

Mamma always spoke vaguely of the West when she meant Mr. Simpson. It seemed somehow more ladylike not to admit that she and Margaret took any interest in hearing about a gentleman's plans.

"Mrs. Gager is sitting with your father and it won't be necessary for you to go up at all unless Dr. Huntley should come before I return."

"Yes, Mamma."

She knew that Mamma did not want her to go upstairs to Papa because it might remind him that Mamma herself was not there.

"I think it's really better for Mrs. Gager to be with your father anyway, dear. You excite him a little when you read to him or urge him to talk. And you know that rest is what he needs more than anything in the world."

Sometimes it was a little hard not to dislike Mamma for the way that she lied to herself about everything that she did. There were two things that Mamma absolutely had to have: her own way, and the complete confidence that her way was the only right way. In a moment of awful illumination, Faith realized that she had always known this. A childish revulsion against the idea of thinking so terrible a thought about her mother was discounted by a pleasant feeling of superiority in having discovered what lay under Mamma's polite and ladylike mask. Mamma and Margaret and Kathie: they were all alike and as different from Papa as could be. Papa was so honest that he would not permit himself to keep the vineyard even for a week after his conscience had ordered him to sell it. Though the house stood now in the shadow of another man's property without the air of graciousness that it had once possessed, Papa preferred to have his worldly, rather than his spiritual, realm diminished.

Faith stood to receive a kiss. When the militantly brisk sound of Mamma's taffeta had died down the corridor, she went back

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to her letter. But there was no longer any comfort to be had from this laborious effort at communication. It began to seem almost like a disloyalty to Papa to make his sufferings an exercise in German composition. Faith's fears had to be carefully translated into something foreign and then they would have to be translated again by John into something pulsatingly immediate and frightening. It was all so strained and dismal. What she needed was to hear John's slow cautious voice. He would say no more than he believed. But into the small quarters that his stern discipline allotted to hope, he would crowd a passionate sincerity. Without John, without Papa, she felt utterly deserted. She pressed her cheek hard against the surface of Papa's desk and abandoned herself to tears.

After a moment she heard Mrs. Gager's running footsteps on the stairs. Terror darted from the old woman to Faith as they stood facing each other on the threshold of Papa's office. Faith could feel the stab of fright like a physical pain in her throat. And then it was gone. She felt curiously calm and ready.

"He's delirious, Miss Faith. I can't hold him in his bed."

"Go for Dr. Huntley, please. Follow him all over town until you find him."

She climbed the stairs pulling her skirts out wide about her so that she could take them three at a time. Papa was standing in his nightshirt with the shawl half-pulled from his shoulders. He looked at her with a wild hostility.

"Where's Faith," he shouted. "I want Faith."

"But I'm right here, Papa. Please, you must get back into bed."

"No, no, not you." He pushed at her arm. "I want my real Faith."

For a moment her arms dropped to her sides. This was the most cruel betrayal of all: to be denied by Papa himself. Not to be recognized after all their years of intimacy. To be pushed away, rejected. But then her arms went around him again, tight and protective. It was the enemy in him that was speaking, not Papa himself. He had reached a far extremity in his illness from which he could see nothing clearly. It was dying that put the distance between them.

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"I've sent for Faith," she said calmly. "She'll be here immediately."

"No . . . no. . . . They won't let her come. They'll keep her away."

She could feel the terrible heat of his body where her arm touched his bared chest. His cheeks were flushed. His voice sounded strange, half strangulated between its outbursts of unfamiliar violence. His eyes seemed glazed with fear and enmity.

"Of course, she'll come. Now you just get back into bed. She won't come until you're warm in bed."

With a pathetic docility he allowed himself to be led back to bed but as she held his hand in the fierce grip of despair, he began to thrash and struggle again.

"I want my Faith. . . . I want my real Faith."

The cry sounded now like something more than an appeal for immediate, personal help. In it was a yearning deeper than had ever been satisfied or that any human relationship now could satisfy. It seemed to her as though the depth of his need lay opened before her like a great dark hole. There had been nothing to fill it: not love, not great achievement, not even, she feared, religious conviction. His despairing cry for Faith was an echo of the despair of his life.

His struggles and his protests grew. She leaned over him, determined to use her strength to keep him there under the blankets so that he might not die on the floor struggling.

"Papa! Papa! She's coming. I hear her on the stairs. She's coming."

Yes, he would die alone, rejecting even her. All his life he had been isolated by his very superiority. Mamma had not appreciated him. Margaret and Kathie ran from him frightened by the exacting integrity that had kept an unending vigil within him. He had been alone always. The books that he read and loved could not nourish him enough. The thoughts that he had given to Faith did not reach their roots down far enough to have a fine growth. The struggle that she witnessed now was the last of a long, long series of which his whole life had been made. He was a great, struggling, wanting, demanding spirit caught in

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the body of a little merchant who, when he was dead, no one would remember very long. She alone would remember his beauty and his need and his yearning for goodness and wisdom.

She could give him life a little longer. All those ideals that he had treasured were in her. She would keep them alive, she would make them grow.

But the comfort of the thought shriveled in a sudden scornful perception of its effrontery.

"Oh Papa! don't die," her mind whispered as she lay with her arms twisted about him. "Don't die. I shall be all alone."

VI

(May, 1889)

NAOMI WINCHESTER was laying away her dead husband's clothes. The heavy stuff of each coat was still sturdy and it was a comfort to think that Dr. Spode would be able to make good use of them for his unfortunate parishioners. Dr. Spode had been so kind and attentive through it all. He had complimented Naomi with delicate sensibility on her Christian fortitude. Yes, he had understood her grief, and she was glad to be able to make some small return for the trouble he had taken.

The cravats might as well go, too. Everything, in fact. It was not wise to have morbid reminders about, to upset poor little Kathie. Naomi had been surprised at the child's capacity for emotion. She had always seemed so bright and high-spirited. To have her cry night after night for her Papa, so that it was necessary for Naomi to take her into her own bed, was a surprise. It was impossible to predict how children would act. Faith, who had always seemed to care so much for her father, was untouched by his death. It was almost indecent that at the funeral she had not cried at all. Naomi had studied her cold face while the service was going on and decided that Faith was even more hard and unfeeling than she had realized. And to expose her brazen indifference to the neighbors: it had been positively embarrassing. And all the while poor little Kathie had been dissolved in tears. It would have done Joel good to know which of his children had really cared for him. He'd always been unfair to Kathie, blaming her for everything, insisting on punishments for a child's little white lies.

Thank heaven, she could make it up to Kathie now. It would be such pleasure to bring a little happiness into her life after the long, long imprisonment that Joel's almost inhuman sternness

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had imposed upon them all. When Margaret married Mr. Simpson in the spring, there would be just Kathie to care for. Faith, of course, was out of her hands. That aloof independence of hers made it impossible to do anything for her. She had her books and they were sufficient for her. But Kathie must have gaiety and all the things that her happy temperament required.

There, that was all, was it not? She surveyed the room. The pile of Joel's belongings had disappeared in the box that he had taken with him to the War. It could be removed just as it was. Dr. Spode could keep the trunk. Joel's toilet things could go to Dr. Spode himself. The brush was of heavy silver and really valuable. But Dr. Spode deserved a gift. And he had always said that he admired Joel's integrity and steadfastness of purpose. It was easy to admire such qualities when you did not have to live with them.

Naomi sighed with the quick-drawn breath of satisfaction. It was so wise not to have delayed over this task. She would need a free mind more than ever before, now that the double duty of parenthood had devolved upon her. Her home was her own at last. She could occupy it without feeling, as Joel had always made her feel, that she was merely an older and slightly more indulged child in it. No one would ever again force her into the position of being a subordinate.

Her cheeks flushed with anger as she remembered the suggestion that Joel's employers had had the effrontery to make to her. She, to continue with his work! They had flattered her by saying that they knew she would do it competently.

But it showed how underbred those impertinent creatures were to have thought that she would consider it for a moment. Her health, which had always been precarious, would never have stood the strain. But aside from that there was the quite insurmountable barrier of good form. It was nothing less than outrageous for those men to think that she would be willing to do something so unladylike. To expose herself in that conspicuous way! driving about like an ordinary countrywoman, dealing with men in stores! Even Joel, with all his faults, had at least understood that she must be protected. His breeding had been unas-

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sailable. It would have outraged him to think that his wife could be expected so far to forget a gentlewoman's obligations toward her own self respect.

The money that Joel had left would have to serve. Dr. Huntley had been over everything as executor, and he had said that with caution she should be able to manage. There were some investments in North Dakota lands of which she had never heard. But they seemed to be quite valuable and no doubt they would be able to cut down expenses, here and there, especially after Margaret was married.

Rising from her knees, she smoothed her apron. She heard Kathie's voice calling outside the door and hastily dropped the trunk lid. The child mustn't see these souvenirs of the past that troubled her so deeply.

"In here, darling. Mamma's in her own room."

The door opened and Kathie sidled up to her mother like a little kitten. Such a dear, affectionate thing and so pretty with her high color and her captivating, pouting little mouth. She would cause many a flutter in young men's hearts and before very long. Indeed it had already begun, almost too soon. No mother could fail to notice attentions as conspicuous as Buford's had been. And John Haddon, too, after he had resigned himself to Margaret's engagement! It would be delightful to guide Kathie, through all the perils of the social world, into the arms of just the right young man. Family, he must have, and money enough to give her the things that such a little beauty needed to set off her looks and her charm. The blight that Joel's unfortunate temperament had put on her own life she would never permit to descend on Kathie. Through Kathie, Naomi meant, at last, to live.

"Mrs. Waldron's down in the parlor," Kathie told her. Her sweet little smile was shy and sly and altogether charming.

Naomi was so caught by the enduring delight of this small replica of herself that she did not at first hear what the child had said. Then a frown of irritation crossed her face. These visits of condolence were so trying. One had to say the same things over and over. People who knew nothing about what one's life had

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been said silly things, based on the assumption that it had been heaven on earth. Of course it was necessary to allow them to think so. One could not be so underbred as to make even the slightest revelation, great though the temptation had sometimes been. And Mrs. Waldron was such a gushing woman. She would require an especially elaborate display of sentiment. Naomi sighed and began untying her apron.

"Yes, darling. Run and tell her that Mamma will be right down."

As she passed the pier glass in the hall, Naomi was quite content with the glimpse she caught of herself. The black dress made her look pale and her face had always been the sort that composed itself into the lines of patience and docility. Mrs. Waldron would be unable to go away and say anything of her but what was not creditable. As a writer, Mrs. Waldron had to be suspected of being also a gossip. Naomi was always careful to be on guard before her.

Mrs. Waldron had chosen the chair where the light fell most flatteringly on her face. The late afternoon rays emphasized graciously the warmth of her coloring though Naomi half suspected that the pink might have been heightened with a touch of rouge. There was always about Mrs. Waldron a vaguely disturbing hint of the fast woman. Her airs and graces were those of a modest lady. But surely no thoroughly nice person would wish to make herself conspicuous as an authoress. If the late Mr. Waldron had left her with little money, she could have done what Naomi herself proposed to do: starve before she would make any concession in matters of taste. There was even something showy and theatrical about Mrs. Waldron's costumes: the ostrich tip that touched her cheek; the shawl that drooped from her shoulders so that it draped her own arm and the arm of the chair in a too graceful line!

But if this meeting must be a contest in the making of appropriate gestures, Naomi could hold her own. After greeting Mrs. Waldron she sat facing the light, caring not at all how it might emphasize her age, if it emphasized also her expression

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of downcast, but unyielding, sensibility. She reached out an arm to Kathie who had followed her into the parlor.

"Run outdoors and play while the sun lasts," she said, and turned again to Mrs. Waldron with a brave little smile. She thought of saying aloud: "My sun is set. But while I have strength I will protect my children's right to warmth and pleasure." She decided simply to allow the thought to be implied.

Mrs. Waldron acknowledged the wisdom of sending Kathie away by smiling a rueful little smile of her own. Immediately she surprised Naomi by becoming almost indecently brisk and business-like.

"I hope you'll forgive me for any seeming indelicacy, Mrs. Winchester. Believe me, I know what a sad, sad time this is for you. But I have a very important and I hope not too impertinent request to make."

Mrs. Waldron spoke like a character in one of her own "Violet" stories. There was always that elaborate indirection in their speech. But despite her antagonism, Naomi's interest was aroused. A pleasant little glow of anticipation filled her mind. Any request a woman like Mrs. Waldron might make at a time like this was certain to be pleasant.

"We've been good friends and good neighbors," Naomi said graciously. "I hope there's nothing I have that I would not be willing to share."

That was quite in Mrs. Waldron's own tone, Naomi flattered herself, and waited with a growing excitement for what might follow.

"I wish I dared to be so sanguine," Mrs. Waldron laughed lightly. She paused for a moment in evident confusion and then went on: "Could it be made agreeable to you, my dear Mrs. Winchester, to let me have one of your children, for a year perhaps? For longer if you could persuade yourself to agree." Her cheeks had flushed an honest color now at this display of temerity. But it was evident that she was determined to finish what she had begun. "The point is this: I've decided to travel again now that Buford is away at college. I've always been a wanderer on the face of the earth and I may as well have a year

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or two more of it while there is no chance of making a home for Buford. I dare not travel alone any more. I need a young companion. I needn't tell you, of course, that a young woman would profit greatly by the opportunity of living for a time in London and in Florence. I never stay for long in Paris because I consider it not a wholesome environment. But enlarging one's culture in England could be only advantageous. I am devoted to the child already and so is Buford. Perhaps you know that only too well. He has been as much in your home recently as in his own. He would be with us in the summer and the young people's companionship could go on as before." She paused and drew a long breath before she went on: "I ask you this not wishing at all to take advantage of an emergency in your life. But I've always longed for a daughter and I should be so glad if you would lend me one of yours."

Naomi's cheeks were burning, too. The significance of what Mrs. Waldron was saying had come to her only gradually. But now she had it full before her and was examining it with eager eyes. What a wonderful opportunity for Kathie. To cross the ocean! To live in London! To be part of the great world that Naomi herself had always longed to see. Terrible to give her up . . . cruel that it should be asked, just at this moment when Naomi had come into full possession of her. And yet: a mother could not dare to withhold such a gift from destiny. Kathie must have it. Kathie must have everything no matter how her mother suffered.

She fumbled for words, not wishing to seem too eager. "My dear Mrs. Waldron, it is the most astoundingly generous offer." Mrs. Waldron waved her hand dismissively. "You've taken me so completely by surprise that I scarcely know what to say. It's hardly for me to decide. Perhaps we ought to speak to Kathie, herself."

A look of puzzled confusion crossed Mrs. Waldron's face. "I . . . I'm afraid I didn't make myself clear. It was of Faith that I was thinking."

"Oh yes, of course . . . Faith."

"It isn't that I am any the less devoted to Kathie. She's a

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beautiful child and she's going to be a beautiful woman. But she's a little young for the sort of responsibility I had in mind. Faith and I have such congenial tastes. I wanted to use her, a little, to help me with my stories. I feel sure that she would like the arrangement. We've done a little of that sort of thing already. A story goes faster when it is dictated and Faith writes in a fair, clear hand and never makes any mistakes. Indeed, she corrects my own. We should get on well together."

So it was Faith who was to have all that. A passion of jealousy swept over Naomi making her feel that her body had contracted under its chilling influence and was pinched into a tight ball of nerves. Faith was to have it, not Kathie! Faith who was hard and cold and aloof, who cared nothing for her family and won her favors from outside, at heaven knew what expense of loyalty! Faith! who would not even know that a gay world was being opened up to her, but would survey it all with the solemn eyes of a school teacher. It was fortunate that she had not given her consent. With Margaret gone, Faith would have responsibilities toward her mother. She wouldn't want to forsake them. It would have been quite different with Kathie. She was too young to help in any case. But Faith with her stern sense of duty would see that the plan was not feasible or fair to her mother.

"You must give me a little time to think," Naomi said aloud. "I, too, count on Faith a great deal, you know. I shouldn't know how to get on without her."

"I'm sure that must be true. She's intelligent and reliable far beyond her years."

"Exactly. And with the other daughter marrying so soon, if I lost two at once, I should be quite bereft. So much has been taken from me, I should like at least to keep my little family together."

Mrs. Waldron rose and crossed the room to kiss Naomi's cheek. "My dear, you make me feel quite unspeakably ashamed of myself for asking. I didn't know about the marriage of the other daughter. I couldn't take from you a comfort which I value highly. To you Faith must be many, many times more valuable."

The beauty of Mrs. Waldron's words soothed Naomi's heart.

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It was true. She could not have so much taken from her all at once. To be alone with Kathie after they had been such a large family would be too dismal and too cruel. A mother must have her children about her. It is the least reward that can be given her for going through the valley of the shadow of death on their behalf. To give a child up to another woman just at the moment when she could be of the greatest comfort: it was too much to ask.

She rose taking both of Mrs. Waldron's hands in hers. They were mothers together sharing a moment of understanding such as is given to women only when their mutual devotion to a child is involved.

"I think you will agree with me, my dear, that it is best not to speak of this either to my little girls or to your Buford."

"Unfortunately, I did mention the possibility in a letter to Buford. I have the very foolish habit of asking his advice, his permission even to do things. I suppose it is because I have no other man to depend on. But Buford is a man in intelligence. You can count on him not to mention it."

"I must have in my little nest only contented birds."

"I quite understand. And if I've distressed you, forgive me."

"You've been most generous and understanding."

As she watched Mrs. Waldron go down the path, Naomi felt distressed and grieved. To have to give up a wonderful opportunity like that was distressing. But the sacrifice had been made to protect her home. It was probably the first of many she would be called upon to make now that she was father as well as mother to her little girls.

VII

(March, 1890)

THEY had all begun to call him Porter, or Poe for short, now that he had come back to marry Margaret. Even Mamma had relaxed her passion for formality enough to drop the surname. But to Faith he seemed more alien than ever. The ruddiness of his face had taken on a look that was not quite wholesome. It was lined with scarlet veins. His substantial figure had coarsened, too, and he seemed not so neatly contained within his clothes. His laughter was no less exuberant, but its quality grated on Faith's ear. She did not like Mr. Simpson. But that, she supposed, was chiefly because he was so unlike the men with whom she felt at ease. It would be priggish to feel that John and Buford represented the only type of which the human race could be proud. Mr. Simpson was much more like the active and enterprising men whom one admired in literature. Faith forced herself to catalogue his excellencies: good-temper, adaptability, graciousness. Still, she wished he would not follow her about with his endless store of nonsense verses and topical songs. He did so only because he was used to an audience, and Margaret was much too preoccupied with wedding plans to be a satisfying listener.

Beaming expectantly, he appeared at the door of Papa's office where Faith was studying for a French examination. Obviously, his talents did not include one which gave him a delicate awareness of being an intruder. He sat down without waiting for an invitation.

"Why do you study so hard, Miss Faith?" he asked trying to shut the book over her hand. "You haven't learned anything important until you've understood that nothing important can be learned from books."

Faith's brow tightened. Briskly and seriously, she examined the pattern of this epigram. It fell to pieces before her, and she

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rejected it. Mr. Simpson was simply trying to be dazzling in a way that he imagined would pique the attention of a blue-stocking.

"I should think your own profession would offer the best proof that that isn't so, Mr. Simpson."

He was obviously pleased to have drawn her into a discussion. He laid a firm hold on her book and drew it away.

"On the contrary, it offers the very best proof that I am right. The law is a very frail instrument at best. What's the good of being fully instructed in all its inadequacies? A clever man simply creates his own law, as he goes along. If you understand the way people's minds work, you can always persuade a jury that the law is whatever you say it is."

He leaned back in his chair smiling broadly.

"You don't think I mean that do you? Then I'll tell you to just what extent I mean it. I hadn't the slightest hesitation in cheating my way through my examinations in law school, because I had no doubt that I knew a great deal more than the examiners. I wasn't going to let a lot of fussy old gray-beards keep me from my work of helping people."

For a moment, Faith did not trust herself to speak. With incredible effrontery, Mr. Simpson had expressed a double heresy. It would have been quite bad enough for him to boast that he had neglected the opportunity to learn all that it was possible to know about his work. But added to that was his sickening pretense that the cheating itself was a negligible thing. But, of course, it was all a lie. Mr. Simpson was the sort of man who likes to pretend to be far worse than he actually is. Literature was full of them: people so lacking in affirmative virtue that they put on the adornments of vice. But Mr. Simpson was boasting of the silliest sin of all, a schoolboy sin.

Mr. Simpson had leaned toward her as he talked. His bulky figure sprawled over the arm of Faith's chair. She drew uncomfortably away.

"You really shouldn't say such things, Mr. Simpson. You may find someone naïve enough to believe you."

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"But I assure you, it's quite true. Don't you know that this is a world in which the all-important thing is to succeed? The men who do things have always been ones who acted first and found the authority for their action afterward. If you try to find authorities in books, you only get confused by the conflicting evidence. It's no different with the law. . . . If there were any knowledge that a man could respect, he'd have to try to acquire it. But when everyone is guessing, the point is to guess quickly. Announce that you are a success and everyone will believe you. You will be a success. Start to wonder about it and you'll be a failure."

The assertion was so confident and so shocking that Faith felt obliged to examine it. Could justice really be just a guessing game? But instantly she repudiated the idea. Surely, the law existed to embody and give vital strength to absolute principles. In all ages and in all civilizations, men of integrity and insight had fought and even died to gain recognition for those principles. To suggest that the things for which the law stood could be perverted at the whim of a man who considered himself clever was just the sort of shabby belief that Mr. Simpson would hold. John had no such feeling and John, by virtue of his seriousness, was much more worthy to be believed.

For a moment, Faith indulged the fanciful notion of herself as Faust and of Mr. Simpson as Mephistopheles, trying to discredit learning. But it was as grotesque to advance him to such importance as it was to advance herself. Mr. Simpson was just an immature creature who made a virtue of his ignorance like a high-school freshman.

Still, he was dangerous, in his little way. The chilling awareness went over her that Margaret ought not to be allowed to marry such a man. If his integrity was so eaten with disease, so might the whole of his character be. She wanted to get up from her chair and run to the room where Margaret and Mamma were working on the wedding dress. She ought to tell them to stop everything before it was too late.

As though she had appeared in answer to an urgent call, Mamma came into the room. She smiled at Mr. Simpson and

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put a hand on his shoulder, to keep him from rising from his chair.

It was already too late. The wedding dress made it too late. The invitation list made it too late. The cake itself, ordered just that morning, made it too late. None of them could bear the humiliation of changing plans. Even if they believed her, Margaret would still be sacrificed to the great god of conformity. But they would never believe her. She would be accused of being hysterical, jealous. Once in a quarrel, Margaret had told her that everyone knew she would be an old maid. Mamma believed it, too. She had never given Faith a hope chest. She had already given one to Kathie. They would be sure it was only jealousy. And perhaps it was. Perhaps it was . . . way down somewhere in the depths of her. Terrible things were in the depths of everyone. She'd seen that when Papa lay dying.

"I've thought of something you can help us do, Porter," Mamma was saying.

"Thank heaven for that. I'm not used to such pampering as I've had here."

Mamma smiled the special smile that she had created for Mr. Simpson. It meant that for a man nothing was too good. Faith turned away to hide her resentment.

"We'll need this room for the reception, and I've decided to clear everything away."

Oh no, no. . . . Faith's mind cried out. Don't take away the last of Papa! Let this little part of him stay! You've forgotten so soon. One by one the reminders have disappeared. But let this room stay as it was! Let me have this much of him, still!

"The office furniture is too heavy for you to bother with. I'll get some men for that. But I thought you might put the books in the attic for me."

"The books, Mamma," Faith said aloud. "Do they have to go, too?"

"Yes, dear. After the wedding I'm going to use it as my own sitting room."

"May I borrow an apron from my twin, Mrs. Gager?" Mr.

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Simpson made a humorous gesture to suggest that his girth equaled that of the housekeeper.

"Oh yes, you must. The books are so old I'm afraid they'll crumble to pieces in your hands."

Faith was left alone with Mamma. Once more she felt the tension that so often existed between them. Mamma was beautiful. It was easy to see why other people liked her. There was a soft graciousness about her, the spell of which Faith could feel without being subject to it, without even liking it. The graciousness was just a part of Mamma's campaign to have her way. Faith felt guilty to know such a secret, guilty and uneasy. It made her always appear smug and severe before Mamma. Anyone would have said that she was unloving toward Mamma. But it was only partly true. She longed to love Mamma. The trouble was that she loved Papa so much more. And Mamma was always trying to destroy Papa's memory. Faith meant to keep as much of it as she could, even though it meant antagonizing Mamma.

Her voice sounded to her own ear harsh and strained. "Mamma, would you give the books to me. I thought you might want to. Today is my birthday."

"Faith, darling, Mamma's so sorry to have forgotten. It's just because of the wedding plans. There's been so much to do."

"Of course, Mamma. I understood. But the books would please me more than anything."

"So many books! Wherever would you put them?"

"In my own room. There's plenty of wall space."

Mamma took her hand. "After Margaret's gone, we'll see. There'll be many changes. You and Kathie will have Margaret's room. I'm going to give Mrs. Gager your old room. Hers has always been too small and chilly. She isn't young any more. We must try to make her comfortable."

"But couldn't I have Mrs. Gager's room then? I shouldn't mind about its being small or anything if I could just have the books."

Suddenly Mamma's face took on the familiar look of being about to be grieved. "I do wish you wouldn't worry me about it now, Faith. Can't you see that Mamma's over-burdened with work and with anxiety. Let everything pass until the wedding is

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over. Then we shall know better what we can do and what we'll have to do without."

"Of course. I'm sorry."

Mamma sighed and sat down. "If you are going to take that injured tone, I suppose I shall have to explain. I can't tell you how Mamma has been worried! Everything is so expensive. Margaret's trousseau, the wedding reception, the extra servants. Mamma just does not know where the money is coming from. Papa didn't leave us very comfortable, you know. And Mamma does so want to do the best she can for her girls." She paused as though what she was about to say required courage and then went on in a rush. "I thought we'd sell the books for anything that they'd bring. Papa owes that much to Margaret. It will help with the wedding."

Faith stood with her hands tight clenched before her. Every other thought had been obliterated by the great shadow of fear. Only once before had it lain over her blindly like this. She had known fear on the day when she became convinced that Papa was going to die. And now they were all threatened by something as dreadful and unfamiliar. Debt and poverty: things that had been only words when Dr. Spode spoke for the unfortunates of his parish. She and Mamma and Kathie might become the unfortunates. Mamma had kept it to herself, trying to protect them.

A feeling that was partly pity and partly gratitude sent her running across the room to Mamma's side.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't know."

She was grasped and held as she had never been held by Mamma before. It was good to be in Mamma's arms. Her own grip went tighter.

"I didn't want to tell you. But now I'm glad I did. Mamma might have known that her clever girl would understand and want to help."

"Yes, anything . . . anything."

Mamma drew away and looked Faith searchingly in the face. There were tears in her eyes, the first that Faith had ever seen there. "I've lain awake at night, thinking and worrying. Sometimes

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when Kathie has been with me, I've put my face in the pillow so that the poor child shouldn't hear me crying."

"Oh, Mamma, how terrible! Poor Mamma!"

"We shall all have to make sacrifices now. But Mamma's so grateful to know that there's one of her children who will make them without complaining."

Faith nodded her head against Mamma's shoulder. This knowledge brought them close. Terrible as it was, Faith was glad to share it. It made Mamma more understandable, made her forgetting the birthday something that no longer hurt at all. She would do something for Mamma and that would be doing something for Papa, too.

"I must go back to Margaret. She was going to try on her wedding dress. She'll wonder what has happened. You mustn't say a word to her or to Kathie, either."

Mamma pulled herself gently away from Faith's arms and hurried from the room.

Yes, Faith thought with exultation, as she stood alone, there was something she could do. John's father who edited the Meadville Journal would give her work. He might pay her as much as five dollars a week. He had paid that to the stupid boy who had done reporting for him a year ago. Mr. Haddon had complained about him to Faith and John and finally let him go. Faith could do better than that boy had ever done. She could write up school news and Dr. Spode's sermons and the charity bazaars and write reviews of Mrs. Waldron's books and other books, too, perhaps. Mr. Haddon did most of the reviews himself, but maybe he'd trust Faith with a few of them. He was always joking about being worked too hard.

She could give all the money to Mamma and buy the books from her out of what she earned. Oh no, let the books go. That was selfish when Mamma was so worried. There were books in other places. Mr. Haddon would let her read anything she wanted to read.

Right now! She would go to see him right now before the fire of her confidence cooled and she had had time to be afraid.

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There was nothing to be afraid of anyway. She had known Mr. Haddon always.

She was putting on her hat behind the screen when Mr. Simpson returned. He looked very comic with Mrs. Gager's apron tied up around his chin, like a great red baby. But he liked the image of himself that he caught over Faith's shoulder and put his finger in his mouth to emphasize its absurdity.

"I'm going to begin with the top shelf," he said climbing to a chair. "Because the ones on top are always the biggest and the dustiest and the dullest."

He dropped a heavy volume as he stepped down, and its heavy brown cover cracked down the side.

Faith winced. There was something dreadful about the sight of that man who hated learning tumbling Papa's books onto the floor. It was like another death for Papa, another show of disrespect for his ideals.

But she mustn't think of that now. She must think only of what she meant to say to Mr. Haddon.

A new life was beginning.

VIII

(May, 1890)

HYPATIA!" Mr. Haddon was calling from his tiny private office in the Journal rooms.

Before Faith could get up from her chair, he had crossed the outer office, where everyone but himself worked, and stood ready to escort her ceremoniously toward his own desk. It was always this way when Mr. Haddon wanted her. His first brisk summons was followed by this second thought, prompted by a special kind of respect. Faith could not restrain a wild leaping of pride within her whenever she received this show of deference. It meant that during these three months her work had pleased him. But she was careful to make her face a mask of preoccupied earnestness. Her private emotions had nothing to do with the business of issuing a newspaper. She sat unsmiling while Mr. Haddon closed the door of his little sanctum.

He fumbled fussily with the latch that would not quite hold, saying, "Drat the door," as she had heard him scold a hundred times in the course of their short intimacy. The utter familiarity of everything that he did was good and pleasant. It was good to be useful; good to be liked. Even the little joke of his calling her Hypatia gave them a special understanding into which no one else tried to penetrate. Faith had read the Kingsley novel to familiarize herself with the history of the Greek philosopher, the first of her sex to be an important teacher. Mr. Haddon had explained the joke by saying that at least Faith was the Hypatia of Meadville for no other woman of his acquaintance was even dimly aware that there was such a thing as the realm of thought.

He was thinking of his own wife, of course. Mrs. Haddon was a pompous, over-bearing, ignorant woman, not in the least like a real Haddon. She had no proper love of learning and had never been known to read anything but novels. She had named

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her daughter Lady Legh out of a trashy piece of fiction in which she had been absorbed when Legh was born. The "Lady" had long since been dropped. John and his sister were amusingly embarrassed whenever the baptismal atrocity was mentioned. But it was Mrs. Haddon's money that had started the Journal and she had to be respected, accordingly.

Mr. Haddon had pulled out the leaf of his big roll-top desk and was leaning across it, looking at Faith earnestly.

"I've an idea for you, Hypatia."

Faith picked up her pad to jot down the details of an assignment. But Mr. Haddon reached forward and took the pencil from her hand.

"It isn't anything that I want you to do for me. It's something you must do for yourself."

He sighed deeply as though what he was about to say were somehow painful. Faith caught a glimpse of the weariness that sometimes frightened her for him. She could not rid herself of the impression that with the weariness went a feeling of disgust for something undefined. Most of the time his round little face was gay and impudent. He liked to tease her by quoting "Pickwick Papers" which he knew that she considered a little unnecessarily coarse. But he had his own standards of excellence and whenever they were betrayed he looked as he looked now.

She felt uneasy even when he went on quite casually: "You're clever you know. Much too clever for any work that I can ever give you to do. You can rip the heart out of a lecture and analyze it succinctly in a few words, as very few men can do. It's a shame for you to have to spend your time writing about high-school debates and church bazaars even though you do it perfectly when the damn thing has to be done. Excuse me for saying 'damn' but there's no other word."

Faith smiled. If that was all he had to say, she need not worry. Mr. Haddon would never be so illogical as to take her work away from her simply because he thought she was too good for it. She did not know exactly what he meant. The high-school debates and the church bazaars were interesting. Of course, she

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would want to do something more important later. But there was plenty of time, a whole life of it.

"But it's good experience, surely, Mr. Haddon."

"The very worst experience possible: coddling the vanity of young fools and old fools. The trouble with you, Faith, is that you are able to persuade yourself that anything you do is important. But you must not betray your gift of enthusiasm. It is a great one if properly used. It can be a damnable one if it is used simply to nourish the self-confidence of mediocrity. And Meadville is mediocrity multiplied many times over and boiling with a sense of civic virtue. You must leave it: you and John and Legh. I won't have you staying here and deteriorating into pompous personifications of nothing at all."

It was somehow agreeable and stimulating to be scolded by Mr. Haddon. The hint of a belief in her destiny more than compensated for the hint of partial disapproval. He linked her with John and Legh as though she were his own child. It made her feel more docile and feminine that she had felt at any time since Papa died.

"But what must I do, then?" She was conscious that a trace of coquetry had betrayed itself in her voice. She hated herself for that show of weakness and tried to obliterate its effect by repeating the question in a different tone. "Oh, please tell me what I ought to do?"

Mr. Haddon had evidently not noticed her small treachery toward the utter seriousness of their relationship. "For one thing: you must go to college."

"Oh yes, of course. To Cornell. That's all planned."

"You must let nothing stop you. You have an inquiring mind, an eager, busy mind. But it must be disciplined. If you are to harness your enthusiasm and not be dragged at its heels, you must have a specialty. You must know everything in the world that there is to know about something. I've said this to John and he has chosen law. I can't choose for you. But whether it's poetry or astronomy, you must know it thoroughly. There's no nuisance in the world like the half-educated man of many little perceptions and sensibilities. A woman of that sort would be much

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worse. I'm expecting you to live up to your name and really be Hypatia."

That was perfectly true, Faith thought. It was necessary to be thorough. She had always been determined to go to college. But surely Mr. Haddon would not take the trouble to say this and no more. He seemed to be warning her against something in herself and she did not know what it could be. The thoroughness with which she had done her work for him ought to be earnest of what she would do in the future. She dallied with the idea of being grieved that he should seem to doubt her. But as she studied his round little face, drawn into the very most sober lines that such a face could achieve, she renounced the idea. There was something more that he had to say to her, and she waited patiently while he decided how he wished to say it.

"Your father, Faith, was a man who should have been educated," he began again. "The War spoiled that for him as it did for many men his age. But he was determined that you should be educated. Really educated. You must not miss it, too. I don't know quite how your mother feels about those things."

"But I can take care of myself, Mr. Haddon. I mean to."

The most brilliant in all his repertory of mischievous smiles spread over his face. "That's what I hoped you'd say. Good girl. Excellent girl."

It was pleasant to have his complete approval. But Faith was bewildered still as to why she had so nearly lost it and now so successfully recovered it once more. But the reason was unimportant. A new excitement seemed to have sprung up between them as Mr. Haddon went on:

"Yes. . . . Now I can tell you why I called you in here. You know at Onondaga, Bishop Sturgis has been developing a kind of summer university. It began as a religious study group. But it has branched out and now all the important men in science and literature go there to lecture. It has become one of the great cultural centers of the country."

Faith nodded. John had been there several times to spend the summer. He had told her of listening to Agassiz and Ingersoll and everyone of whom she had ever heard. It had taken John

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three days to give her a full account of all the extraordinary things that happened in the course of a few weeks at Onondaga. Music, too, and plays . . . everything. She had dreamed of it for days afterward thinking that it must be a kind of modern Athens. And only twenty miles away from Meadville.

"It's so important that the whole country is beginning to be interested. Newspapers from Buffalo and Philadelphia last year sent men to write stories about it. I've just had a letter from an editor I know in Baltimore asking if I can suggest a way of getting the lectures reported regularly."

A hope too bright to be looked at boldly sprang up in her mind. She half hid from it behind the fear that she might be fatuous. And yet Mr. Haddon had said only a moment ago that she could tear the heart out of a lecture better than most men. He must mean that she might spend the summer at Onondaga and report its affairs for the Meadville Journal.

He leaned once more across the desk and Faith saw that he was no less excited than she. "What I want to do for you, Faith, is to help you organize your own syndicate of papers to write for them about Onondaga. I can get you the Baltimore paper and I'm sure that it will be easy to get, perhaps, half a dozen more. You'll earn several times over what I can possibly pay you here and it's work that you need not be ashamed to do."

She could not restrain the tears that smarted in her eyes. To conceal them she dropped her head. She was being translated into glory and the only thing that she could do was to drop her head as though she were profoundly ashamed. But Mr. Haddon would understand. Some other time she would try to tell him of the unspeakable joy she felt. But now she could only count upon his goodness. She could only reach out her hand blindly to be caught by his as though he were Papa and she were beside him once more riding in the buggy through the warm spring weather. It was like having Papa back, for a moment, to be close to Mr. Haddon. In his little office, life had become good again. She had been able to work hard without ever feeling tired. She had worked harder at school than ever before, and still there had been plenty of energy and eagerness with which to begin a

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second day's work at the office. Her strength seemed to increase with every effort to exhaust it. Life was wonderful. It had never been as wonderful as now.

Mr. Haddon patted her hand and then tactfully guided it toward the pocket where the corner of a handkerchief was showing. They both laughed.

"You know," she began and her voice broke into a maddening quaver.

"Yes, yes, I know," he answered. "It's a very poor thing I'm able to do. I wish you were my own child." Then with a strange trace of bitterness he added: "Or that I had money for which I did not have to account to others."

Faith looked up troubled. But his gaze had become entirely impersonal, even a little stern. "There's one thing that you must promise me. You must save all your money to go to college in the autumn."

For a moment that frightened her. It meant telling Mamma that she would have to stop turning over her wages each week. She had meant to talk to her very soon about college. But being faced directly with the obligation was different from thinking about it in vague anticipation. One had so much more courage about facing a crisis across a comfortable distance in time. There was always the hope of a helpful, intervening accident. But she must speak to Mamma tonight. She owed that to Mr. Haddon.

"I'll send my wealth to you to keep for me," she laughed.

"I'm almost tempted to let you." He eyed her sharply. "You won't be afraid to be so far away from home?"

"Oh no."

"I've thought you might stay with my family. John and Legh will be there with their mother. They'll be plenty of people to keep an eye on you."

That made it perfect to have John and Legh with her. They would get so much more stimulation by being able to discuss things together. She left Mr. Haddon's office feeling almost as though she were really Hypatia about to enter into her work at Athens.

Mamma was wonderful about the idea of her going to Onon-

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daga. She was so sympathetic that Faith felt ashamed of having thought she might be difficult about the money. That issue was not mentioned at all because it would have seemed like doubting Mamma's generosity to speak of it just when she had given her permission for Faith to go.

Things had been different at home ever since Faith had gone to work. Mamma had had to dismiss Mrs. Gager after Margaret's wedding to help make up for the money Mamma had given Mr. Simpson to help furnish the house in Drummond. But Faith was never allowed to help in the kitchen. Though Kathie grumbled at being expected to assist Mamma with the housework and complained of Faith's leisure after dinner, Mamma always said:

"Faith has her work, too."

It did not make things very easy with Kathie, but at least it showed that Mamma wanted to be fair. Once Faith had arranged secretly to help with the dishes after dinner so that Kathie could get away early to the sewing circle. But Mamma, who was supposed to be lying down with a headache, had come to the kitchen and discovered the intrigue.

"Faith," she had said quite sternly, "you must get back to your lessons. If you don't continue to do well in school, I shall be criticized for letting you work for Mr. Haddon."

Kathie's sense of wrong increased every day. She reached the point at last of actually being impudent to Mamma. Still the rules were strictly enforced. After dinner Faith went immediately to her room to study and was never interrupted until Kathie came in to go to bed. Then a screen was arranged so that Faith's student lamp should not shine in Kathie's eyes. From beyond it came a succession of whispered confidence about boys and teachers and scandals to which Faith had learned to close her ears so that the sound was like the rustling of the wind. And at last it died away completely and Kathie slept.

But on the night when Faith had come home with the news about Onondaga, Mamma broke the routine herself by coming to Faith's room.

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"Darling," she began, "Mamma's been thinking that it wouldn't be quite ladylike for her little girl to go away like that so far."

The radiant glow of anticipation faded. It had been too good to be true. She might have known.

"But Mamma," she protested automatically, "I should be all right. Mrs. Haddon is to be there and I could get her to . . . help me if I needed help."

"Will John and Legh be there?"

"Yes . . . yes . . . I needn't go anywhere after dark without one of them. They go to all the lectures."

"That's splendid, darling. We'll all go. That's what Mamma meant. It will be such a splendid opportunity for Kathie. The very nicest people go to Onondaga. She'll have as delightful a time in her way as you will have in yours."

Mr. Haddon's sober, challenging face rose before Faith's eyes. It was not what he had planned. It would be expensive for Mamma and Kathie to go, too. But once Mamma had made up her mind there was nothing to do but accept her arrangements.

Mamma caught Faith into her arms.

"Won't it be wonderful to be doing so much for all your family?"

"Oh yes, splendid, Mamma," Faith said.

But she woke in the night out of a troubled dream. Mr. Haddon had been chasing her. She would think that she had eluded him. And then he would be at her again, a strange, dark, shapeless form but somehow unmistakably, Mr. Haddon. At last a great many other people became involved. They threw Faith down and piled weights upon her.

The weights proved to be nothing more terrifying than Kathie's legs flung across Faith's body. But as she came to herself, the image of Mr. Haddon became almost more terrifying than it had been in the dream. He would be disappointed in her if she did not manage to save her money for college.

IX

(June, 1890)

KATHIE ran down the path by the river toward the place where she had agreed to meet Artie Holmes. From behind the bushes he appeared with his arms outstretched ready to receive her. The impetus of her running brought her up squarely against him; she felt her body closely and strongly enfolded.

There was a wonderful excitement to all this physical activity. It was better than playing tennis, better than rowing on the river. The excitement had to do partly with the fact that Artie was so handsome and so disturbingly bold. But even more exciting was the thought of how shocked Mamma and Faith would be if they knew that such a meeting had ever taken place. Mamma was so afraid of not being ladylike and Faith was an old stick-in-the-mud who would never know what it was like to be kissed by a man. The temptation had been great to tell Faith because it would have been such fun to see her eyes become great deep pools of horror. But it was not safe to tell anyone until Artie had actually promised to marry her. She had had to be content with dropping little hints at the sewing circle. That was almost necessary in order to let Miriam Wilde know to whom Artie belonged. Miriam also liked him. But she was much older than Kathie and not nearly so lively. Kathie felt confident enough of her hold on Artie to indulge in a word or two that would make Miriam squirm with jealousy.

Artie did not let go of her waist but managed to drop to the ground, pulling her down beside him. Kathie forced his arms away and drew herself back. She nursed her demurely covered ankles and faced him complaining:

"Can't you try to be a gentleman just for a minute?"

"I can try. I can even succeed . . . if you really want me to."

He was smiling with the assured impudence that always made

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her long to pique him into a more outrageous display of his fascinating and awful gift. Princeton had made Artie more fearfully attractive than ever. He had added his football triumphs to all the assets of picturesqueness that he already possessed. Artie never walked down stairs to breakfast. Instead he climbed over the banister and with a wild whoop leaped from the second to the first floor. He rode his horses through the streets of Meadville at break-neck speed and even Dr. Spode's garden was not sacred if Artie took it into his head to use his lawn as a short-cut. What he did was immune from criticism, at least from criticism spoken aloud, because Mr. Holmes had been chairman of the Meadville town council many times and it was his name that headed every subscription list for every purpose. Artie possessed the glamor of reckless impudence. Kathie loved it and meant to possess it, too. When they were married, she would ride beside him, no less wildly. She would dress with as much polite ostentation. Together they would cut a wide swath.

"Now you stay right where you are, Artie Holmes," she said threateningly as he moved toward her again. "Tell me all that you've been doing at Princeton."

"Haven't you read my letters?"

Kathie turned upon him scornfully. She had to be as impudent as he was so that he should not be able to forget her from one meeting to the next.

"You're the most uneducated person I know. Not more than half the words in your letters are legible and not that many make sense."

"Then don't you read the papers?"

"Of course! I read all about the Harvard-Princeton game. You were wonderful."

"Well, that's all I can tell. Anything else I've done your mother wouldn't want you to be told."

But those were the things about which she wanted to hear. She couldn't imagine Artie at Princeton grubbing over a lot of dull books the way John Haddon did at Cornell. Artie would do wild, delightful things wherever he was. If she could find no other way to tempt him into making confidences of the kind she longed

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to hear, then she would have to let him come closer so that she could tease him into intimacy.

"Artie, you're so mean," she said and turned her head away.

Her maneuver had the desired effect. He was beside her now and his arms were about her again.

"What is it you want to know?" he whispered.

"Just everything. What it feels like to travel. I've never been out of Meadville. The sort of boys you know at Princeton and what they talk about. I'm so tired of being stuck in a dull little town where there's no excitement."

"It isn't places that make life exciting; it's people."

She felt that there was a compliment to herself implied in the observation and she turned toward him questioningly. His answer was to kiss her again. But it wasn't a kiss of the ordinary kind at all, not in the least like the kisses that she and Mamma exchanged. Artie's lips were pressed hard upon hers. They were parted; trying to part her own lips. She forced them together, frightened, and drew away.

"What's the matter?" he laughed. "Don't you like it?"

She did not dare to admit that she did not; did not dare to lie and pretend that she did. Artie was too important a person to be antagonized and she clung to him in panic: fearful of losing him, fearful of any further commitment; longing for protection; longing for danger, for everything and nothing all at once. She fumbled with his cravat, trying to hold him away from her and at the same time to preserve their intimacy. A bright object that had been concealed by his coat caught her eye. It was a gold pin in the shape of an arrow. Surprise tingled in her mind like the sensation of a cramped hand trying to come alive again. It was Faith's pin. She was a sly one giving jewelry to boys and never letting anyone know. The stinging sensation had suddenly become jealousy. She faced Artie challengingly.

"That's Faith's pin. Did she give it to you?"

Artie angrily drew his coat over his cravat. "Of course, she didn't. I won it as a forfeit at the party John and Legh gave last Christmas."

"But you're supposed to return forfeits afterward."

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"I'm going to return it . . . some day."

Amusement at having uncovered such a secret overlaid both surprise and jealousy. Here was something about which she could tease Faith. There had not been many opportunities, lately, with Faith working all day and Mamma protecting her even at night. But this was too good a chance to miss. She forced Artie to look at her.

"Are you in love with Faith?"

"Kathie, don't be a little fool! Everyone knows that John and Faith are going to be married some day, even if they don't know it themselves. They were born for each other, if two people ever were. I simply admire Faith because she isn't like everyone else in the world. Once when I was riding down Chestnut Street I saw that she was stooping to pick up one of her books. I rode past her and picked it up by swinging down from my saddle. When I handed it to her, she thanked me without a smile as though people were always picking up her books that way. I felt like an awful fool. At first I was angry and then I knew that I deserved it."

Artie looked abstractedly down toward the river. Kathie drew away from him in bewilderment and he let her go. Could he be thinking of Faith still? Was it possible to think anything about her except that she was too clever to have a good time or to give anyone else a good time? But when Artie spoke again her questions were answered startlingly. He turned toward Kathie with a curious, impersonal eagerness.

"Faith isn't beautiful. But there's something about her you don't forget. She's like an actress. Once I saw her sitting all alone at a party. She didn't mind being alone. Her head was dropped against the back of the chair and there was a far-away, sad look in her eyes like a picture I've seen of Sarah Bernhardt. Bernhardt isn't beautiful either and she has a big nose like Faith's. They are alike and once you've seen either of them you think about them afterward, often. Faith's like an actress when she gets angry, too. She crackles like a bonfire. And when she's scornful, you know it without her having even to put it into words."

"Is that why you keep her pin?"

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Artie reached angrily inside his coat and fumbled at the cravat. "Here, you can give it back to her if you're so afraid I'll steal it."

"No, thank you. You can give it to her yourself. Who was your nigger servant last year!"

She made as though to rise not really intending to leave him but determined to fix his attention once more upon herself. He caught at her shoulders and forced his mouth again against hers in that frightening way while his hands began to move down across her body pressing hard and searching. In honest horror, she pulled herself away from him and got to her feet. "Artie," she gasped. "You mustn't do that!"

"Why not?" He stood beside her angry and defiant.

"It isn't nice."

"But that's just what it is: nice. You don't know how nice! how very nice!"

His arms were outstretched toward her once more. But the same yearning after excitement that had made her run to meet him now made her run away. He called after her as she climbed the path. But only when she had reached the top of the hill did she turn back. He was standing where she had left him, his feet stretched wide apart looking like the statue of an athlete. She blew him a kiss and then turned to run as fast as before.

The excitement was purely pleasurable now. If Artie wanted to kiss her that much, he would follow if not today, then tomorrow or some time. Let him marry her and then he could kiss her as much as he liked and any way that he liked. She knew how to manage him.

She slipped in the back way, hoping that her absence might have been unnoticed so that she would not have to lie to Mamma about where she had been. Stealing down the corridor toward the stairs she heard voices from Mamma's sitting room. Dr. Huntley was there again. He was scolding as usual, probably about Mamma's spending so much money on clothes. It was terrible to be responsible to a horrid old man like Dr. Huntley who did not understand how necessary it was to dress well if you were going to attract the right people. She paused on the stairs to learn just what he was being so noisy about. She wanted to be

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armed with the right answers when Mamma repeated what he had said.

But it was not about money this time. "I won't be responsible," he was saying in his most grating and ungentlemanly voice, "I tell you I won't be responsible at all if you continue to let the child work so hard."

For a happy moment, Kathie imagined that he might be talking about herself. Had the old idiot actually seen that it was not fair to keep her indoors doing housework when she should be out on the tennis court? But that pleasant hope faded instantly when Mamma answered:

"But Dr. Huntley, Faith loves her work."

"Of course she loves it. She belongs to the over-active type of human being that much prefers to be busy. She'll keep working until she drops. But you are making a great mistake to encourage her to do so much. Have you forgotten completely what a struggle we had just to keep her alive in the first place?"

Oh, that old story! Kathie was good and tired of hearing about Faith's frailty as a baby. Even Mamma used it to excuse Faith from doing her share of the housework. And here was Dr. Huntley trying to scare Mamma all over again with the same heart-breaking yarn. Faith did nothing but sit all day at the Journal office and at home. No one ever gave a thought to Kathie. It was supposed to be all right for her to wash dishes and slave over a hot stove cooking and fill her lungs with dust, cleaning. But Faith must be let off everything because she wasn't very strong. And now Dr. Huntley did not want her even to do a little writing for a newspaper. As though that were anything compared with what she did. Kathie continued to listen in fascinated fury.

"As long as Joel was alive, Faith managed to keep fairly well. All those drives in the open air helped to build up her resistance. But you've let her shut herself up inside, scarcely, if ever, getting any exercise. I tell you it's all wrong and she's going to have to pay the penalty for it sooner or later. You can't overwork a young girl of Faith's age without laying up trouble for her in later life."

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And now Mamma's voice was angry. She was going to talk back to that old brute, thank heaven.

"I think I may be trusted to know what is best for my own child."

Dr. Huntley snorted in a most undignified and a most ungentlemanly way. "That's just how you can't be trusted. It seems never to have occurred to you that intellectual stimulation all day long and all night long, too, may wear the child out before she has properly begun to live at all. Her mind will lose its elasticity if you put so much burden on it, while nothing is done to build up her physical resistance. There are certain types of people that have to be held back for their own good, not pushed hard. Faith is one of them and you are making a serious mistake with her."

It made Kathie squirm to hear him lecturing Mamma as though she were a little girl. Why didn't Mamma order him from the house? . . . or slap his cross old face? . . . or something? Instead, she was being nice to him again.

"I know you don't wish to approve of me. But I doubt if you can manage to be so contemptuous of my plan for the summer. I'm taking Faith to Onondaga."

"To rest?"

"Yes, primarily."

"I know that place. A pack of frenziedly intellectual school marms running from lecture to lecture with their silly tongues lolling out of their mouths. But if you keep Faith from overdoing, I suppose a lecture now and then is absolutely necessary to her. But she isn't to work!"

"Well, of course, you can't expect to keep a girl like Faith idle. She's planning to do a little writing."

"I see! The same old round of running from lecture to lecture and writing them up. My God, Naomi Winchester! I can't understand you. You refused to take employment when it was offered you because you were too frail and it wasn't womanly. God knows what all your excuses were! You, a healthy, middle-aged woman. But you hound a half-grown, under-developed girl out to work for you. Have you ever tried to understand what you

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are doing? Have you ever taken a square look at yourself? It would be a damned salutary experience."

"Dr. Huntley, I'll thank you not to curse at me. If you can't behave as a gentleman should, I shall have to ask you to leave my house."

"I'm going, Naomi Winchester. But not before I've told you one thing that it will be good for you to hear. You're a cold, callous woman. All your silly pretensions about being a lady don't deceive me a bit. Nothing matters to you but getting your own way. You'd drive me insane in six months if I had to live with your top-lofty disregard for decent human feeling of any kind."

If Mamma could stand being scolded like that, Kathie could not stand it for her. She plunged down the stairs before she had thought what she intended to do and rushed into the sitting room. The sight of Dr. Huntley's face infuriated her and she began beating with her two fists on his chest.

"You can't talk to my Mamma like that. You're a mean, beastly old man. You can't talk like that to her or to me."

Her forearms were caught in a firm grip and she felt herself lifted from the floor and set aside.

"I see that you've brought your children up to be faithful to your principle of never listening to an unpleasant truth. I shan't interfere with you again. Since we're no longer friends I shall have to make over the conduct of your affairs to someone else."

"We were never friends," Mamma was saying. "You were always Joel's friend and my enemy."

"That's true. God pity Joel. And God pity Faith."

He was gone.

"Poor Mamma," Kathie cried and flung her arms around the square-set shoulders. But Mamma's body did not relax into an embrace. Looking up in surprise, Kathie saw that Mamma's eyes were not upon her at all. They seemed to be looking through the wall. They were angry eyes, frighteningly angry.

X

(August, 1890)

FAITH threaded her way through the crowd, leaving Professor Armstrong's lecture on "The Temporal Power of the Papacy." Her report was already shaping itself in her mind and she wanted to reach her desk at Miss Burton's boarding house before the revealing phrases had deserted her.

A chirping enthusiasm filled the hallway. Spare, eager women and dignified, voluminous ones gathered together in little groups to exchange comments on Professor Armstrong's material and his presentation of it. It was hard to escape from the Atheneum. These informally assembled discussion groups barred Faith's way. She had to be very crisp and authoritative in her frequently repeated requests for permission to pass.

Still, she liked the eagerness of these women. They expressed the spirit of Onondaga. Here, all the resources of the world of learning were pooled and teachers came from all over the country to increase their store of cultural wealth. If there was an uncritical confusion to their appreciativeness, as John said that there was, at least they were intellectually alive. That was better than the mental lethargy of most of the world.

John really loved it, too. He came each night to Miss Burton's boarding house to share with her the excitement of each day's gleaning. Together they had discovered many new enthusiasms. For Faith none was better than the finding of Epictetus. His philosophy of serene submission to the trials of circumstance spoke as directly to her as though she and the thinker were face to face. Epictetus was more real to her than . . . than Kathie, for example, whose whining discontent was completely alien. It had ceased even to irritate Faith. Kathie had confessed that she was miserable for Meadville because Artie Holmes had returned there. Naturally Artie Holmes would be discontented in this

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atmosphere where pure intellect had become enshrined and was worshipped by everyone down to the very janitor who swept out the Atheneum. Once when Faith had had to return for a lost glove, the janitor had engaged her in a discussion of Platonism while they moved together up and down the aisles.

"Now you take this Plato," he had said. "They ought to talk about him more in the schools. If they knew he was such a good athlete, the boys would respect their books more."

As she walked across the grounds, every vista brought back a memory of some stimulating encounter. There under the trees the band had played "Tannhäuser." Here was the very spot where she had met Bishop Sturgis himself, walking toward the Atheneum with his tall, handsome son. They had stopped to speak to John and he had presented Faith. Bishop Sturgis had been very kind. Laughing his booming and exultant laughter, he had told of a dispatch written by a correspondent for the New York Times which referred to "a little girl in pigtails called by courtesy a reporter."

"And you don't wear your hair in pigtails do you, my dear?" he had concluded. "You should regard such spite as a compliment. It shows that the writer is jealous of your rivalry. As well he may be . . . well, he may be. You write beautifully."

Certainly her papers were well satisfied. Two of her editors had written her little notes of praise. She carried them about in her bag, drawing fresh enthusiasm from them whenever she felt tired. She did feel tired sometimes. There was so much to do and she wanted to miss none of it. She must finish with Professor Armstrong quickly so that she could return to hear General Lew Wallace read from "Ben Hur." And tonight Julia Ward Howe was going to give her Reminiscences.

Faith had caught a glimpse of her as she was escorted through the grounds by Bishop Sturgis. She was a splendid figure, as valiant-looking as her poetry. At seventy she walked very straight and proud. A casual glance from her thoughtful eyes had fixed Mrs. Howe's image permanently in Faith's mind. She could see the aristocratic features in the heavily lined face. A melancholy but unconquerable fortitude dominated her expression. Yet she

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was gay, in spite of her sadness. John had met her on one of her earlier visits to Onondaga at Bishop Sturgis' house. He had told Faith about Mrs. Howe's making an outrageous Latin pun. Faith had anticipated nothing so much as Mrs. Howe's lecture. She was certain to talk about her work for prison reform and perhaps there would be something about the place of woman in modern society.

Kathie was sitting at the desk in their room at Miss Burton's. There would be a stupid quarrel if she asked her to move. Irritation at having to crawl with her pad of paper onto the bed made Faith aware that she had a headache. If those maddening pains that began at the back of her head and burst finally like fireworks in her brain were to come on, she could never get through the work that she had planned. They always made her sick at last. Already she had been nearly blinded and completely incapacitated by two of them, since she had come to Onondaga. They were getting worse and worse. At home she had sometimes gone into the back room at the Journal office, been sick and returned to work. But here at Onondaga, where she had been so much happier than ever before, the attacks had perversely become worse. She could do nothing but draw the blinds and lie with a wet napkin over her brow and eyes. She had maddening visions during a sick headache, too. Idiotic little figures moved with feverish activity before her eyes doing things that she could not quite make out and upon which, though she was not in the least interested, she was somehow forced to concentrate intensely.

I mustn't have a sick headache now, she scolded inwardly. I won't! I won't!

To protect herself she spoke politely to Kathie, urging her not to move and reaching as unobtrusively as possible for her pencil. Her eye fell on the pad of ruled paper that lay before Kathie. It was impossible not to see that the letter was addressed to "Dear Artie." Kathie was shameless! How could she have so little taste as to pursue Artie? She had no pride at all. If he had wanted very much to be with her he need not have left Onondaga. There was plenty to be done there even if he was inter-

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ested only in sport. Kathie's letter looked like the dreary scrawl of a servant girl. Kathie's penmanship, like her carriage, was full of uncertain leaps and plunges. She had been crying. That was evident, too. She seemed positively to want to have her squalid condition noticed, probably as a prelude to another long confession like the one in which she had told Faith that Miriam Wilde was trying to take Artie from her. As though any self-respecting person would want a man that could be taken from her!

The nervous fear that Kathie meant to break in on her privacy made her head throb more violently. As she turned away from the desk, Kathie, with deliberate histrionic effect, dropped her head forward and began to sob.

"Oh, Faith! What am I going to do? What am I going to do?"

Faith let an arctic wave of disapproval flow over her words as she answered: "I can't stop to talk to you now, Kathie. I have work to do."

A muffled sob came from the desk. "All right. But it will be your fault if I kill myself. You don't care about anybody but yourself. You don't care whether I live or die."

A fury of resentment increased the wild disturbance in her head. She felt as though all the percussion instruments of the band, playing "Tannhäuser," were being beaten against her very skull.

But she had discovered that the best way of avoiding Kathie's confidences was to seem to listen to them. She could shut her ears to the sound of the whining voice and go on working.

"All right, Kathie," she said. "You lie down on the bed and tell me all about it. I'll sit here with my back to you and that will make it easier for you to talk."

It was almost mean to take advantage of her. Kathie was so ready to be deceived. She allowed herself to be led away from the desk; allowed her slippers to be removed and the pillows fitted comfortably under her head.

"I want to go home, Faith," she began. "But Mamma won't let me. I have to go and find out why Artie's angry with me."

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He hasn't answered any of my letters and I'm so worried that I can hardly sleep at night. . . ."

Faith pulled her pad and pencil toward her. . . . Couldn't sleep at night! Hardly a night passed that she didn't wake to find Kathie's heavy body stretched diagonally across the bed crowding her against the wall. Kathie slept so soundly that she could not be moved. . . . Now, what was the sentence with which she had intended to begin her report on "The Temporal Power of the Papacy"? . . . Something about the hard cash value of spiritual domination in the Middle Ages. That wasn't as good a phrase as she had invented before. But she would have to begin with it now if she hoped to finish in time. "Professor Josiah T. Armstrong, outstanding authority on medieval history . . ." she wrote. The pencil darted over the page, tracing out the large, clear letters firmly. Even the physical labor of writing was pleasant. Faith began to forget her headache. It throbbed less violently now. Perhaps she was going to avoid being sick. That was a stroke of luck.

". . . until we came up here, I know he liked me best. He even tried to kiss me once. Of course I didn't let him. . . ."

Kiss! How inexpressibly vulgar! A boy like Artie Holmes!

"Oh, Kathie!" she murmured aloud. "How frightful for you!"

"Well, I tell you, I didn't let him. It was just at a party and I suppose I'd been teasing him. . . ."

Now did she dare tell that story about the atheistic Pope who had said: "This Christus myth has been most useful to us." She decided that she did not. It had shocked her a little to hear Professor Armstrong tell it, in the first place. Her papers were sure to cut it out anyway.

She wrote concentratedly for half an hour. The sound of Kathie's voice had died away completely. When Faith rose at last from the desk, she saw that the child was asleep. She turned up the face of the watch pinned to Kathie's dress. There was just time to give Miss Minton her story to copy before she went to hear General Wallace. She would have to run in order not to be late. The opening remarks were the most important on

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such an occasion. The reading itself would give her little to write about.

She reached her seat, breathless just as the fine old man stepped onto the platform. He lacked the voice of military authority, but even this curious, high-pitched, piping inadequacy seemed somehow to make her headache worse. To avoid being sick now she would have to go without supper. And that meant a difficult time with Mamma. Mamma always insisted that Faith must eat even when all the signs, about which Mamma knew nothing, indicated that it was better not to. She found that she had worried about Mamma all through the talk and scarcely heard General Wallace. But it did not matter very much. She had read "Ben Hur." She could manage.

As she stepped from the porch of Miss Burton's boarding house that night she was feeling really sick. Mamma had won about supper. The meals were paid for in advance, she had said. As though there were a reason for eating when one knew, also in advance, that a particular meal could not be kept. Faith had eaten as little as possible but every mouthful lay like a stone in her stomach. If it were anyone but Julia Ward Howe she would go to bed and give up everything. Yes, including supper . . . oh, very particularly, supper.

John came toward her through the dusk. He had evidently been waiting.

"Oh, you're going to the lecture!" she said eagerly.

But he answered dolefully: "Is there a lecture? There's always a lecture."

In the dim light of the porch he looked so dismal that Faith laughed. It was as though he were a little boy who did not want to go to Sunday school. But her laughter seemed to hurt him. He looked away confused, shuffling his feet and running a big hand through his hair to push back the heavy lock that fell into his eyes. He was a little boy for all his talk about logic and law and Epictetus. She felt mature and protective. And suddenly she knew that she loved him. It was not as exciting a thought as she had imagined it might be. John had been with her always and she had assumed that he would be with her always. It was im-

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possible to think of reading without wanting to tell John what she had read or of writing without wanting to show John what she had written. She felt that way about Buford, too. But it was different with him. She had not missed Buford at all this summer. She thought of him happily. She liked getting his letters from London. But there was no pervasive warmth in her feeling for Buford as there was in nearness to John. Yes, she felt protective but she felt respectful, too. John was going to be a great man. What she wanted was to be near him always and help him with what he had to do. He had used her help often and he would need it more and more when life really began for them.

There was no reason why she should not admit that this was love: this warm, enveloping emotion that enclosed the two of them together. This certainty of contentment and richness and power that welled up within her ready to meet and be joined to the strength that she felt in John. She felt at home with this love because it had been part of her for such a long, long time. It made no difference that she had just acknowledged it. The days and days of closeness made a chain so strong that nothing could break it. Still it was delicious to use the word, love. Loving John would make everything that she did more important because all work would be done now partly in his service. Standing there beside him in the dusk, the closeness to him was complete, though they said nothing and did not even touch hands.

"Faith, don't go to the lecture tonight," John urged.

She was tempted to forego everything else and spend the evening just with him. But she had to think of her work. John had no work to do. He was simply enjoying himself here in Onondaga. He ought not to be indulged in this little boy impulse to play hookey.

"John, I can't. It's Julia Ward Howe!"

That did not seem to impress him. "I know. I've talked to her lots of times."

She saw that he was not being fair and that he had no intention of trying to be fair. To belittle the importance of a great

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woman like that simply because he had already had the advantage of intimacy with her was even a little snobbish.

"I haven't talked to her, John," she said reproachfully. "And she is one of the most important of all living women."

He had felt the sting of her rebuke and was determined to defend himself. "Of course she is. But what can she say to a group of people like that!"

"I think people like that, as you call them so scornfully, are the most important in the world: teachers and scholars."

"Teachers maybe, but not scholars."

His heresy was beginning to irritate her. "What do you mean, John?" she demanded.

"Don't you honestly think there's something a little shabby about this place, Faith? I mean its pretensions. All this elaborate show of giving culture to people who only want to be able to say that they have it and who care nothing for the thing itself."

Tears sprang into her eyes. It was not like John to try deliberately to hurt her. And it did hurt her to have him ridicule an experience that had meant so much. She was making herself sick in order to keep up with the opportunities it offered. For John to dismiss its importance snobbishly was to dismiss as trivial all that she was doing.

"I'm sorry you think us shabby, John."

"Not you, Faith. I didn't say you were shabby."

"But I am a part of Onondaga . . . the least part. . . ."

"That isn't true, you're the most and the best. Do you suppose these other people really listen enough to make intelligible reports of what they hear? You are learning something. It's important to you because you have the capacity inside of you to make it important."

It was good to hear him say so. Almost all the sting was gone. It would be a comfort to tell him that she would give up the lecture. But that would be to admit that she had been flattered by what he said. He would laugh at her, afterward, for being so easy to flatter . . . almost as easy as Kathie.

"I'm sorry that I offended you, Faith. Really sorry. May I walk with you to the Atheneum?"

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"Of course. Come with me to the lecture, John."

"I can't . . . I . . . I'm too disturbed."

As they walked in silence, Faith stole a look at his handsome face, a little aloof, now, almost stern. What could be troubling him, she wondered. Surely he would not let such a tiny quarrel, even though it was their first, make him so miserable. It must be something personal . . . a scene with his mother, perhaps.

On the steps of the Atheneum, they paused.

"You won't change your mind and come in?"

He shook his head. "Not tonight." Suddenly he jerked his head toward her as though with a painful effort. "Faith, there was something very particular I wanted to say to you tonight."

In an instant she understood all of his confusion. She knew why he wanted to be alone with her, even why he had wanted to hurt her. John resented Onondaga and its impersonal intellectuality because it got in his way. John had made the discovery that he was in love and he wanted to tell her about it.

The feeling that she had for him ceased to be quite simple and serene. It had divided itself into two feelings and one was John's love for her. She wanted to catch at that love and bring it close to herself. For a moment she was unaware that there were people about her. She and John stood alone on the edge of the world and all the world, fair and shining, lay before them.

Then the sound of many excited voices broke through her preoccupation. The school teachers were surging around them with their air of exultation. Faith felt lost and frightened.

Not here, not now, she thought. But oh, John, my dear! . . .

For a minute after he had left her, she could not remember quite why she was there. Then she turned and walked slowly up the steps.

XI

(August, 1890)

THE letter to Mamma simply would not get itself written. Margaret had sat for an hour with her new note-paper before her but she had not got beyond: Dearest Mamma—.

On the scratch pad beside her she had sketched pretty girls and then put beards on them and plumed hats, turning them into Cavaliers. She had written the alphabet and the first stanza of "I shot an arrow into the air." All around the edge of the paper were versions of her own name: Margaret Winchester; Margaret Simpson; Margaret W. Simpson; Mrs. Porter Simpson; Mrs. C. Porter Simpson; Mrs. Poe Simpson.

But all that brought her no closer to Mamma. If she were not Mrs. Porter Simpson, she would be at home in Meadville going to parties instead of being stuck away in a dreadful place where no one came to see her except women who were twice her age and more. . . . Oh, so terribly much more!

She caught a glimpse of her face in the mirror over the desk. It almost made her cry, to see herself looking so discontented. What good was it doing her to be beautiful? just for a lot of crabbed old people whom she saw principally in church? It was not even her own church. Porter had dragged her to the First Methodist, here on the shabby South side of town where they lived. He had insisted on her joining because, he said, it would be good for him professionally.

How Porter had profited was more than she could see. They were really terribly poor. That was the awful truth. Porter had not even let her spend the money Mamma had given her to furnish the house because, he said—as though it were a joke—that they would be needing it for food soon. Indeed, they had already used twenty-five dollars that way. And the living room was so poorly furnished that Margaret was ashamed even before

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the ladies of the First Methodist Church. She had seen their eyes wandering about appraisingly. Not that she had let them know the truth. Oh no! Imitating Mamma's most confident air she had said that she and her husband were waiting to find just the things that they liked. Of course, she had laughed, in a place like Drummond it was difficult to find the right things. It had given her a great deal of satisfaction to let those miserable gossips know that she was from New York State, from the East, where people knew how to live properly.

But deep within her was a terrible misgiving. She did not understand why she and Porter were less important people here in Drummond than the Winchesters had always been in Meadville. It gave Margaret a panicky feeling to be slipping back, this way. She did not like living in a shabby little house that was inadequately furnished. But somehow more dreadful than her actual loneliness was the loss of self-confidence that resulted from having no friends of her own age and, worst of all, no beaux. Margaret had assumed that there would always be men about her to admire her—innocently, of course. She missed the pleasant disturbance that such young men had always created in the life of the Belle of Room Fourteen.

Everything was bewildering about this life she lived. Its isolation, its shabbiness, its actual physical pain—these were definite grievances that could be examined and resented. But her real discontent lay deeper than that. It lay, in fact, deeper than her own understanding could reach. She did not know, for example, why Porter seemed in his new setting less handsome and confident than he had seemed in Meadville. Why had he decided to leave Chicago? Why was his father so angry with him that he would send no money on which to get started? Porter had given no adequate explanation when she had tried to question him. Margaret wished eagerly that he would confide in her. She had lived always in an atmosphere of confidence. Mamma had told her everything and Margaret had treasured up all her own secrets to give them to Mamma. But Porter scarcely talked to her at all. He kept his secrets to himself and was even a little angry when she tried to urge him to explain about his father. It would

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have been pleasant to scold together at his meanness. Instead, she was left alone with her awful doubts.

The doubts themselves were too shadowy and vague to be told to Mamma in a letter. A letter was meant to contain facts. You should be able to tell Mamma that you were well or that you were sick, whereas she was really neither. When she woke up in the morning and was sick with this baby, she felt miserable enough. But later in the day, when the discomfort had passed, she longed for activity. She felt more active physically than ever before in her life. Then, the fact that there was nothing to do frightened her, once more, and she felt sick without really being so.

She had not even told Mamma about the baby. That was because Porter had asked her not to, until they were quite sure. It made her nervous and unhappy to be keeping something so important from Mamma. She was certainly sure enough now. But only this morning Porter had urged her again to say nothing about it. To be treating Mamma like an outsider was unbearable. It was the feeling of treachery that made letters so difficult.

She heard the front door slam. It must be Porter even though this was not his hour for coming home. Margaret slipped her note-paper into the drawer. This habit of hiding things from him had already become fixed upon her. She disliked it, but there seemed to be no other retort to Porter's own unwillingness to share secrets with her. Though there was certainly nothing incriminating about the salutation: Dearest Mamma at the head of a blank page, she did not want to be instructed again about the reasons for being cautious in what she said to her mother. It was better simply to let him believe that she had been as idle as, in fact, she had been.

He kept calling up the stairs to her in a voice that became more and more querulous.

"In here, Porter," she answered when she had closed the desk.

He pulled the library door open with a jerk; plunged half-way across the room, as though he were coming up to her; then thought better of it and dropped into a chair several feet away from her.

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"Margaret, I came home especially to talk to you." She could see that Porter was terribly disturbed. He kept twirling his watch chain round and round his forefinger, not in the familiar steady way, but with an angry impatience, as though he could not wait for each process of winding to be complete so that he could begin the unwinding. "It's about this baby you think you're having."

"I . . . I felt badly again this morning, Porter. I think it must be true."

"Yes, I'm sure it's true. You're not ready to have a baby so soon, are you?"

She did not understand what that could have to do about it, now, since apparently she was having a baby in any case. If Porter had asked her before the baby started, she would probably have said no. Now she felt differently. However, she might as well humor him since he seemed to wish to be considerate.

"Oh, I don't know. I've so little to do. I think a baby would make me feel more at home in Drummond." He looked up at her sharply and she was afraid she might have hurt him. "It's just that the baby will belong here and that will make me feel more as though I belonged." Still it did not sound right. And she began again: "I mean . . ."

But Porter cut her short. "Well, I don't think I'm ready to settle down to the responsibility of having a child, even if you are."

What he was saying did not seem quite intelligible. All that she knew about the having of babies was what Porter himself had told her. Even on that night before her wedding when she and Mamma had had such a nice talk, nothing was said except those few things that a gentlewoman, like Mamma, could bring herself to say. She had warned Margaret that men had certain impulses to which it was necessary to yield since that was the way in which a wife made a return for her husband's generosity in supplying her with a home. After the very first time, the whole thing seemed to Margaret like nothing at all. But Porter had certainly indicated that if you started to have a baby there was something very definite about it. What was it he had said? . . . "If you get pregnant, you're a goner."

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A wild hope sprang up in her. Perhaps he meant that since things were so difficult here in Drummond, he would have to send her home to Mamma to have her baby. That would be almost too wonderful! To be going home so soon! Mamma would be glad to have her first grandchild in her own house!

"Do you mean, Porter, that I'm to go home to have the baby?"

"No, Margaret, I don't mean that." He spoke slowly looking at her straight in the face with the boldest and most challenging expression. "I mean that we must get rid of the baby."

"But I thought you had to have a baby once you'd started."

"No, that is a mistake."

She could not have said what it was that frightened her. But Porter was speaking solemnly, almost defiantly. A dim and troubling awareness came to her that a contest was being enacted between them. If she did not suggest now that she also had a will, a purpose of her own, Porter would assume complete control of their joint destiny forever. That was what Papa had done to Mamma, and Mamma had always hated it. Almost as though she felt Mamma's spirit prompting her, Margaret turned assertively toward her husband.

"But I want to keep this baby. I don't want to get rid of it."

Porter sprang to his feet and came up to her catching her wrists firmly in his hands.

"Don't be a god-damn little fool! Do you like the idea of starving? That's what we shall be doing if we take on the responsibility for another life. You don't seem to understand how hard it is, getting started in my profession. Now that I have nothing to hope for from my father, we have to be damned careful if we want just to keep alive."

Margaret began to cry, knowing that without Mamma, alone in a world of unfamiliar scenes and unfamiliar people, she had no protection against this stranger to whom she was married. He would do what he wanted to do, because there was no friendliness in him any more. He did not laugh and pay her compliments as he had done in Meadville. Mamma would not recognize him. Even Margaret, who had been with him the greater part of every day since the wedding, saw him as a man whom she had

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encountered quite by chance and from whose vaguely disturbing presence she would be glad to escape.

"What are you crying about?" Porter demanded sharply. "Are you afraid of an abortion?"

The sound of the unfamiliar word filled her for the first time with an actual dread, a fear for her own body which she had always loved and treated with the delicate consideration that so beautiful a thing deserved.

"Porter, what are you going to have done to me? Please, don't let anyone touch me," she heard herself pleading.

"Nonsense, whatever you've heard about it is a lie. It's perfectly simple. A friend of mine is coming this morning to help us out of this damn mess."

"I won't let him come near me!" she cried out, in panic. "Don't you dare to let him into this house."

He gripped her wrists, pressing with his thumbs so hard that she moaned with pain.

"You hysterical idiot, listen to me! We haven't a cent in the world, except that money your mother gave you. I'm having one hell of a time to get started. Kindly get it through your doll's head that I'm in trouble and need a little sympathy. If you knew all the anxiety and danger I went through in Chicago, trying to get a little money on which to keep you, perhaps you wouldn't bellyache so much about the first thing I've asked of you. . . . Now, I'm beginning all over again, with the whole legal profession against me, just because things didn't turn out well, down there. You're my wife, Margaret, and you have to help me, whether you like it or not. . . . You needn't be afraid that the doctor will hurt you. He'll give you the best care he can, because he needs my help as much as I need his. . . . Now, you're going to do as I say and do it damn cheerfully."

They faced each other in bitter antagonism, and Margaret knew that she had lost. He had no intention of listening to her fears. She could see hatred in his eyes. The hatred was for her body, because its ways had proved inconvenient, and for herself, because she had not yielded easily to his demand. In the bleak desolation of her mind, there sprang up a hatred to match his. She was ready

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to consent, now, not because she had ceased to be afraid, but because she did not want the baby of a man who could be so cruel. Let him have his way. She was ready.

She scarcely looked at the doctor when he arrived. Her mind had become hazy with shock and dread. With the eagerness of panic, she drew in the anesthetic. . . . As she came to herself, she heard a voice saying over and over again: "This is the end. . . . This is eternity." The discovery that it was her own voice seemed, for a moment, almost funny. Then, as the awareness of an incredible exhaustion and pain swept over her, she opened her eyes wide and screamed: "Porter, he's killing me . . . killing me."

Her husband put a hand over her mouth and whispered: "For God's sake, be quiet. The walls of this house are like paper."

She turned away from him. If that was all he had to say to her, even now, she would be quiet for the rest of her life.

The two men conferred, together, in hushed voices. Presently, Margaret became aware that the doctor had gone. She opened her eyes. Her husband was looking down at her.

"You'll be all right," he said, "if you just lie still. The doctor says you mustn't get up for anything."

"I shall be all right," she said wearily.

Porter was silent for a moment and then went on, apologetically:

"I really ought to go back to the office for a little while. You wouldn't mind, would you, Margaret? You'll be all right."

"I shall be all right," she repeated.

It was what he wanted her to say. She knew, now, what she must do and what she must say to please him. Pleasing him was important, so that there should be no reason to notice him at all.

He leaned over and kissed her on the forehead.

"Sorry it had to be done, sweetheart. You'll be glad when you feel quite well again."

Not until she had heard the front door slam did she permit herself to cry. The tears rolled down her cheeks in the steady, quiet flow of complete desperation. She paid no attention to them. Her mind was occupied with the letter she would write

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to Mamma as soon as she felt able. She would say nothing about Porter's having been in some terrible trouble in Chicago. She would say nothing about his being engaged in shabby legal affairs. She would say nothing about this terrible experience. Mamma must not be grieved. But what was important was that Mamma should come to her and be with her always.

Margaret was aware of a strange, divided feeling about Mamma. There was a kind of resentment in the yearning that crowded her heart. Mamma was responsible for her marrying Porter. Mamma had urged it, thinking him rich, thinking him a member of a superior world. That world was shattered, now, and Mamma must share it with her. That was only fair. Mamma must come. There was no reason why she should stay in Meadville. Faith could find work here in Drummond. Kathie could go to school here. . . . If Porter did not want Margaret to share his life, she would have a life of her own. Mamma would attract the sort of people she liked and that Margaret liked. That much was owing to Margaret for the disappointment she had suffered. Mamma could not fail to understand.

She thought no more of the exhaustion and the pain; she thought no more of Porter and his cruelty. She thought of the sofa at home at Meadville and of how Mamma looked as she sat, serving tea, her black dress spread out over the blue brocade. She thought of how the sofa would look in the living-room downstairs.

XII

(August, 1890)

IT was always pleasant to be with Legh Haddon. Though she was only two years older she seemed to Faith a woman in maturity and poise. The fact that she was not pretty had made Legh renounce that whole world in which young men and women met and coquetted discreetly. She described herself as the sort of creature who seemed always to be on the point of dissolution. It was true that the coils of her hair, as thick as John's, were always tumbling about her ears and that her clothes, expensive and well-made though they were, seemed always to show a rip or swagging hem.

But Legh had qualities that were better than charm. She had generosity and curiosity. Faith profited particularly by Legh's kind and stubborn inflation of spiritual and intellectual values. It filled Faith with a kind of pleasant restlessness to hear herself praised for possessing fine mental qualities. She wanted to leap up, to run and accomplish something that would justify Legh's belief in her.

The two girls had spent the afternoon on Pilot Knob, rehearsing the events of the summer. Now that it was over, it seemed to have contained a particularly fine sort of excitement. They clung to the memory of it in this last meeting. When they returned to Meadville there would be little time before they started off, in different directions, for college. Faith had decided to go to Cornell because John was there and Legh had decided to go elsewhere for the same reason. There was a terrible temptation, she confessed, to try to make John think as she did and that was precisely what she did not want to do.

"We do feel so exactly the same way about most things," she concluded, "that it is positively unsafe for us to be together.

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One of us is sure to become the echo of the other. And in the long run that would have to be me."

Faith laughed. "I can't imagine you as the echo of anyone, Legh. Unless, perhaps, you might be an echo of Julia Ward Howe."

"No, I should be John's echo finally, because he'll be doing a real piece of work somewhere in the world ten years from now while I shall be dabbling. That's all even an intellectual woman can do unless she's some sort of genius. You're much more likely to be the echo of Julia Ward Howe, Faith. You have character."

"And Haddons, of course, are weak, self-indulgent creatures who lack the will-power to carry them to any kind of achievement!"

"Not precisely. But Miss Lady Legh Haddon has her career all picked out and she would really rather not be upset in her plans. She's going to be an eccentric old maid volubly interested in some freak cause like finding homes for indigent cats. There's too much of my mother in my makeup for me ever to grapple with anything seriously. I shall end by being just like her, no doubt: complacent and bullying and almost totally a fool."

It startled Faith to hear anyone criticize a parent so bluntly. She had said much the same thing to herself about Mrs. Haddon. She had even criticized Mamma in her own mind. But to say devastating things like that, straight out, to someone who was not even in the family was almost like sacrilege. Faith felt herself stiffening with resistance against Legh, realizing vaguely that what she hated was the fear that she might be tempted to make similar confidences.

"Oh, dear," she said aloud, "I know you mean to encourage me, Legh. But if you have such a poor opinion of yourself that makes me lose heart, because I can only have a worse opinion of myself."

"That's nonsense," Legh interrupted. "Already you've done things that no woman has ever done before. You have the right kind of intelligence to become really educated. Do you know what your favorite expression is?"

"I didn't know I had a favorite expression." The thought of

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herself as a person with characteristics so definite that other people had remarked and classified them surprised and rather pleased her. She turned toward Legh eagerly. "You seem to know what my character is better than I know myself. I wish I knew."

Legh slapped her thigh with the vulgarity upon which Mamma had more than once remarked. "That's funny!" she laughed heartily. "You used your favorite expression just this moment."

"What do you mean?"

"Those four words: I wish I knew. I've heard you use them a million times, if I've heard you use them once. Whenever some abstract question is raised, your first comment is: 'I wish I knew.' Father says you have intellectual curiosity. He told John and me, one day, that, when your mind is trained, you'll be a leader in some field or other. The fact that you're a woman can't keep you out."

"He said that to me, too."

"Father's always preaching to John and me about the necessity of being highly trained in some specialty." Legh's gaze wandered down the hill. "Poor Father," she went on, "He'll be sorry to see us at home tomorrow. He does enjoy his summers all alone so much."

Again Faith was aware of a bold insinuation in Legh's comment. It troubled her. Of course, Mr. Haddon must dread the return of his wife. But that was not a consideration which other people, especially younger people, were free to examine. The downright quality that made Legh Haddon slap her thigh like a man, Faith found amusing. But when she made blunt comments about her father and mother, it was distressing.

"What do you think about marriage, Faith?" Legh went on quite unaware of Faith's distress. "I don't know what to think. All I can say is that from the outside it looks like a frightful bore. Of course, that isn't what the idealistic writers say and I assume that they know better than I do. But that's still my opinion just the same."

Faith thought soberly of what Legh had said. Now that it had been stated as an abstract consideration she found that it interested her. But Legh's opinion was not hers. It did not look like

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a bore. Even if a woman became what Legh called an echo, that need not keep her from being a nice, clear and discriminating echo. Perhaps she had less character than Legh thought; perhaps much less than Legh herself; but she could imagine fates much worse than being an echo.

She realized that, for her, the issue had slyly ceased to be abstract. She wanted passionately to talk about John. But the connection in which his name would have to be introduced made that impossible. She could not betray even to Legh that she had thought about marrying John. She was sure that on that night of the Julia Ward Howe lecture he had meant to propose to her. But it was still only an assumption. Delicacy forbade the mention of his name. It made her a little sad to have John excluded. The three of them had always been so intimate. Yet now it was necessary to be discreet. Her eyes filled with unreasonable tears and she turned away to hide them.

Legh was going on. "My father and mother have never really liked each other and I've never been able to like my mother, hard as I have tried. I suppose some people have to go on, making the same mistakes over and over again just to keep the race alive. But there is the question of why the race has to go on. Have you ever thought of that?"

Legh had slipped into one of her contrary moods. It was scarcely necessary to listen to her. She would talk in this wilful vein until it was exhausted.

Faith's mind ran back to John. Since the evening when they had failed so ridiculously to understand each other, they had been together constantly, quite on the old terms. It was as though the curious intensity of that experience had been dreamed. Faith wondered sometimes if it had actually occurred. It was impossible for her not to look at John a little differently. She met him each day with a kind of expectancy that was half hopeful, half fearful. It was absurd; but Faith knew that she invited a renewal of that special intimacy and that she retreated from it at the same time. Yet as she studied John's face, he seemed to be concealing no unexpressed wish, no unresolved intention.

At the times when she believed that she might have deluded

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herself, Faith was enveloped in a melancholy of which she was both author and victim. She invented a million desperate humiliations and died a lingering death with each. Every syllable of their conversation on the night of Julia Ward Howe's lecture, she repeated over. In her inward ear she heard once more John's every intonation. With each repetition, the significance changed. Sometimes she persuaded herself that there had been nothing but mockery in his voice. Perhaps, he had meant to ridicule her as he had ridiculed Onondaga.

Worst of all was a small fear that appeared in many disguises. Sometimes it attacked her like a yelping terrier: nipping, snarling, running off a little way, returning again. Sometimes it came upon her, while she was working, and lay like a huge black shadow over all the past. It was the fear that she might have betrayed to John her love for him.

Nothing could be more likely than that he had seen her confusion and her inward surrender as they stood before the Atheneum. She was as bad as Kathie, running after Artie Holmes. John would find her assertiveness as unwomanly as she herself had considered Kathie's to be.

These were the thoughts that harassed her at night. Sometimes they seized upon a moment of inadequacy, at the onset of a headache, to afflict her with a still more sickening nausea. They did not survive the return of daylight and of normal conditions. When she and John were together, he was as simple and kind as always. Every evening he came to escort her to the Atheneum. Though she hoped sometimes that he might develop another wayward impulse about attending lectures, he never did. They sat, side by side, in an absorption that seemed to envelop them alone. Often they were amused to discover how well their notes corresponded. The same phrases seemed significant; the same climaxes, eloquent.

Gradually fears had been driven off by John's warm and casual faithfulness. But she was not wholly content that he should be so casual. As the civil war within her subsided, Faith became aware that the timid and covert hope of John's speaking to her again had become a yearning need, a demand.

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Now they were soon to part for many months with nothing said between them. If it were only possible to make Legh talk about John, she could at least take some comfort from mentioning his name. But Faith hated the idea of such timid indirection. If she could not speak of him without betraying her state of mind she had better not mention him at all.

But the prohibition that she put upon her tongue kept her silent about everything else as well. The sound of Legh's voice came as though from a great distance. Faith wished suddenly that it were possible to end this interview and go.

"You haven't listened to a word I've been saying."

She looked up to face Legh. Her smile mellowed the sharpness of the accusation into rueful humor which seemed to be directed at her own loquacity.

"My mind did wander for a moment," Faith admitted.

"I don't wonder. My parents' problems have nothing to do with you, of course. You'll marry and be the right sort of wife: a partner and collaborator."

Faith frowned. Mamma and Kathie assured her constantly that, of course, she would never marry. Legh's comment had an almost shameful sound. It was as though Legh were suggesting that Faith should defy and disobey Mamma. But shame for once was associated with a tingling excitement. Faith realized that she wanted to defy Mamma and above all else she wanted John. No matter what Legh might think of her, she must find out whatever she knew about John's emotions.

"I don't say," she said. "Kathie's always telling me what a bluestocking I am and she says that boys are afraid of bluestockings."

She knew that for the first time in her life she was being arch and provocative. The knowledge made her cheeks flush. But by a deliberate effort of will she held her voice steady and looked Legh squarely in the face.

"Oh, Kathie," Legh exclaimed irritably. "What does she know about boys like John and Buford?"

Why did Buford have to be brought into it! Faith was as impatient with the thought of him as though he had stupidly intruded. But her heart immediately made amends. Buford who

was never stupid, who had the grace of a dancer in matters of sensibility, would never intrude. Nor was it Legh's fault. In her hearty and wholesome innocence, she simply linked the names of three friends as they had been linked so long. Legh could not know that Faith herself had lost her innocence. At this moment she would give anything for a single word to flatter her hope of having John's love.

"Yes," Faith said slyly, "Buford has always been a very faithful friend. I've had such a lot of delightful letters from him this summer."

"He doesn't like you any more than John does." There was something defensive in the tone, as though Legh felt suddenly obliged to defend her brother's interests. "He doesn't really like you half as much."

It was difficult now to keep her voice from shaking. "What makes you think John likes me so much? He has never given me any indication of it."

"He's given me more than an indication."

Legh's tone was almost sulky. It pleased Faith to think that she wanted so much to make a special claim of this sort for John. It must mean something.

"I shan't be able to believe you unless you tell me when it was."

"How should I remember? Much earlier in the summer. I remember what he said, though. He said he liked you like sin."

Still, Faith felt obliged to behave as though this were merely frivolous girl-talk.

"Like sin," Faith laughed. "I shouldn't have thought that John had an over-developed taste for sin."

The spell of Legh's slight antagonism was broken.

"Oh well, you know how John is. He's read enough books to understand that he ought to like sin. 'The Inferno' alone would manage that quite clearly." Her smile faded as she spoke. "Seriously though," she went on after a pause, "I mustn't say anything more. It's no business of mine to say just how very much John likes you."

Blindly Faith reached out for Legh's hand. Oh! then it was

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all right! She had not imagined all those things that had made her so happy and so miserable. It no longer mattered whether John spoke or not. He had spoken to Legh and Legh had confessed as much as John himself dared now to put into words. It was all right. He need not speak. She was completely happy again.

She pressed Legh's large hand in her smaller one. With a sudden awareness of strength she felt that she could crush it. Then she realized that this ecstatic pleasure meant pain to someone else.

"Legh, I'm so sorry!" she cried.

The other girl held up her limp hand and shook it languidly. "It's only the left one," she laughed. "I never used it much. If you'll just spare me the right . . ."

XIII

(August, 1890)

NAOMI WINCHESTER was grieved, more grieved than she had ever been in her life. Since the return from Onondaga, everything had gone wrong that could possibly go wrong. There was, first of all, the anxiety about money. Dr. Huntley's heartless refusal to handle her interests any longer had had something to do with the fact that nothing was paying as well as it had before. The summer had been expensive. For the first time in her life Naomi was actually in debt. At least she saw no hope of meeting the current month's expenses with the money available. The last checks that Faith had turned over to her had been barely enough to get the family home.

And in addition to being expensive the summer had been a total failure. Kathie had been so preoccupied about Artie Holmes that she had not been in a mood to make the most of the social life at Onondaga. Naomi had been grieved more than once at the child's petulance. It was so unlike the sunny little thing to answer back crossly. The fault was that, at best, there was not money enough to give her the sort of setting that such a lovely little thing deserved. Naturally, the dullness of it made Kathie restless and ruined her temper.

She had complained often of having to share a room with Faith at the boarding house. Faith's work had kept her awake at night. Probably there was nothing that Faith could have done about it. She was conscientious where her writing was concerned, if about nothing else. Faith had not been in the best possible health either. But she was stubborn and hard, just like her father, refusing to eat or to take advice about caring for herself. Time and again, Naomi had gone into her room and urged Faith to go to bed, only to be told quite petulantly that there was work that simply had to be done that night. Certainly it was not her fault if Faith was

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determined to labor over a little bit of writing three times as hard as anyone need. She had read some of the things that Faith wrote for the papers. They were really quite short and need not have taken her fifteen minutes if she had known how to adapt herself. That was the worst thing about Faith. She was not adaptable.

It was inevitable that with all that nervous strain and sickness, Kathie should have reacted badly, particularly when her sensibilities were so upset. Naomi had thought several times of letting her go home. But it had seemed foolish to take Kathie away from the very center of a society that drew people from the best and richest families of New York and the whole of New England. They had stayed on, Naomi hoping from day to day that Kathie would learn to adapt herself.

As she sat in her little down-stairs drawing room, Naomi felt that its walls were closing about her. Beyond the window the glimpse of the town offered no promise of freedom. It, too, seemed to be dwindling, to be crowding around her. She did not like the fantasy at all and tried to dispel it by tapping impatiently on the table with the edge of the envelope held in her hand.

But the gesture served only to recall her mind to another source of grief. Margaret, too, was proving unadaptable. Of all her girls, Naomi would have counted most upon her to get on well in the world. Yet here was Margaret betraying all kinds of fears. It was unfortunate, of course, that Poe Simpson's father had proved ungenerous and that Margaret was obliged to live on so little money. But many young people had to make sacrifices of that kind in order to be together. Margaret had made her bed. She must not be permitted to think that she could return to her mother's bed every time that she had a childish nightmare. She must say just that in her next letter to Margaret. The words stated the case rather neatly.

Still, she could not drive from her mind the feeling that not only Margaret, but she herself, had been betrayed. When Naomi tried to remember what it was that had given her such complete confidence in Poe Simpson's wealth, she could think of no sustaining piece of evidence. It made her angry with Poe Simpson,

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and the irritation seemed almost to justify the implied protests of Margaret's letters.

Naomi was not used to confusion and betrayal and angry shows of resentment. It was the atmosphere in which she had lived for the past few weeks and it accorded not at all well with her taste for a dignified way of life. There was no adviser to whom she could turn. Joel had left her alone in a world which he had peopled with his own friends and her enemies. She saw no hope but that the confusion would grow more terrifying. The betrayals would multiply until she was engulfed with troubles and could not lift her head out of the rising tide of anxiety.

The front door opened and almost immediately she heard Kathie's voice screaming: "Mamma! Mamma! Where are you?"

For a moment Naomi was tempted to pretend that she had not heard. The piercing quality of the cry was enough to indicate that Kathie was more than ever full of petulance and misery. But it was no use, trying to hide from a child like Kathie.

Naomi rose and opened the door. At sight of Kathie all the miserable threads of her existence which she had been trying to pull straight seemed to be jerked into a maddening snarl. For the first time in all the child's life, Naomi felt something like anger against her. Only it was not quite anger. It was grief, mixed with desperation. She knew that some culmination had been reached to the summer's restlessness and apprehension. She knew also that there was no solution for the problem, whatever it might be. Automatically she opened her arms. But Kathie did not rush into them. She stood before her mother fixing her with a look almost of hatred.

"I won't stay here," she exclaimed with bitter defiance. "You can't make me stay here even a month, even a week."

It frightened Naomi to see this favorite child standing so resolutely before her. The length of the room that separated them had become an unbridgeable gulf. It was for Kathie that Naomi had always taken the tenderest thought. To satisfy Kathie's whims the whole life of the household was arranged. Yet all the sacrifices had not been enough. One error of planning made Kathie an

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unapproachable enemy. She used words that were intended to hurt. She flung out random hints at cruelty and coercion.

Naomi's arms ached, now, to enfold the child. She wanted not so much to give comfort as to receive it from the familiar gesture. Kathie must not be angry with her. She stepped toward the sullen girl, smiling with placative timidity. The old enchantment of her smile must be effective! It must! Naomi could not bear the look of Kathie's unhappy face.

"Come here to me, darling. Tell Mother about it. Mother will make it right."

"But you can't make it right. You've already done everything to make things as bad as they could possibly be. I don't want to be argued with. I won't stay here. That's all."

Abruptly the child's anger broke in a storm of tears. She flung herself down on the sofa, heels agitating skirts into a wild swirl.

Naomi approached her and laid a hand on her shoulder. "You must tell me, Kathie. Is it something about Artie Holmes?"

The tense body was jerked once more into an upright position. Kathie faced her mother with a frightening look of bewilderment and rage.

"Yes, it's about Artie Holmes. He's going to marry Miriam Wilde. That's what it's about. And I won't stay here to see it. You took me away from him so that that nasty girl could flirt with him and make him promise to marry her. Now you'll have to take me away again so that I shan't ever have to see either of them again. I won't . . . I won't . . . I won't . . ." She leaped to her feet and ran toward the door. "If you won't go with me, I can go alone."

Before she knew what she was doing, Naomi had run across the room. She stood with her back against the door, seeing the room in a strange haze, seeing Kathie as though there were two of her and both larger than normal size.

"Kathie!" she heard her own voice calling as though from half-way across the town. Then both the strange images of the child disappeared at once and she was aware only of a great, frightening shadow lying over everything.

When she came to herself, Naomi was lying on the sofa. Kathie

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was still there. And Faith! And Dr. Huntley! It seemed curious that he should be with her again after their bitter quarrel.

Naomi's glance slipped indifferently past Dr. Huntley to catch Kathie's eyes again. The child burst into tears. "Oh Mamma, darling . . ." she cried out and dropped to her knees beside the sofa.

Dr. Huntley lifted Kathie up and thrust her aside. That was like him: to interfere when the child was being so sweet. Naomi could not remember quite clearly why she wished Kathie to be sweet. But there was some urgent need. Oh, yes, it came back to her. There had been a quarrel. She must have fainted.

"What happened?" she asked in panic, trying to sit up.

"Lie still, Mamma," she heard Faith saying.

An over-powering weariness made her yield. It did not matter what happened now. Someone else would have to take care of things. She had fainted. She was ill. All the responsibility was too much. She had tried too hard and things had been too difficult. Someone else must do the thinking, now, about the debts, about Margaret and Kathie . . . everything. She began to cry.

"Don't let yourself do that," Dr. Huntley commanded crossly. "You had a shock and fainted. You'll be all right when you have rested for a little while."

Rested for a little while! That was all he knew or cared. When had she ever been able to rest? Since Joel had left her with the responsibility of a growing family, she had never had an opportunity to rest. But circumstances had become too difficult for her to manage alone. Someone must help her from now on.

Dr. Huntley urged Kathie toward the door; closed it behind her and came back to Naomi's side.

"There's nothing for you to worry about," he said petulantly. "Only don't talk to Kathie any more today. Faith will stay with you. I'll give you a little something to quiet your heart. It's nothing serious that has happened to you."

Naomi did not listen to him any more. He was unsympathetic, as always. Now that she was getting old and ill she did not have

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even a doctor's care. It was impossible to get on without even that. A solution would have to be found.

Then suddenly she saw her way lying clear before her. It was as though the inevitable right path had lain there all the while; it had been hidden under the shadow of her fear. But it was actually so simple. She would take her family to Drummond to live with Margaret. That would settle everything. She would be closer to her affairs in North Dakota; she could help Margaret adjust herself to the new life; she could help Kathie to escape from the old life that she disliked so much. Faith could find work in Drummond as well as here. Naomi could see all the elements of her life brought once more into neat balance, just as she liked them to be. With a deep sigh of relief, she closed her eyes and waited while Faith received Dr. Huntley's instructions at the door.

The conversation ended at last. Naomi felt the presence of Faith at her side. She reached out a hand without opening her eyes and drew the girl down beside her.

"Mother has such a wonderful plan for all her girls," she said.

Faith's cool hand was on her forehead, smoothing the hair away.

"You mustn't try to talk now, Mamma. Just rest. You know what the Doctor said."

"But I want to, Faith dear. It will do me good."

Still without opening her eyes, she outlined her plan, happily elaborating on the details. Most of the furniture could be disposed of. That would insure their having plenty of money for the trip. She would save only a few pieces that she really cared for. Margaret's house was big enough. There would be room for them all. Once more, they could help each other, as they always had.

Naomi did not immediately realize that Faith had said nothing. Surprised, she opened her eyes. Faith was not looking at her at all. Instead she was staring fixedly at nothing, looking so astonishingly like Joel that Naomi caught her breath. Yes, that was as she remembered him when he was about to be censorious! Faith was her father all over again. There would be trouble between them until the end. But as long as Faith lived under her roof she must

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learn to conform. Now that everything had come right, Naomi would endure no interference.

"Faith, dear, you don't say anything. What are you thinking?"

The girl's eyes met her own, and still they were Joel's eyes: penetrating and stern as his had been that awful time when he had accused her of stealing money from the household allowance for illegitimate purchases.

"I think the plan is excellent, Mamma," Faith said and looked away.

Good! She was not going to be difficult, after all.

"I'm glad it pleases you. I'm sure you will be able to find something to do in Drummond. It's a bigger place than Meadville. There should be much better opportunities. I know how much you love your work. It's what means most to you. . . ."

She felt Faith's hand on her own.

"Mamma, I meant that it was excellent for you and Margaret and Kathie. But not for me. I'm going to college, and it's best for me to stay here to get my education. I'll work, of course, and take care of myself. But I'm not going to Drummond. It isn't what I want to do with my life."

Naomi felt her hand fix firmly upon Faith's. She was going to be difficult, after all. Faith was hard and selfish like Joel himself. It did not matter what was best for everyone else! She thought only of herself!

Suddenly Naomi felt something of Faith's hardness growing in herself. Once she had made up her mind, it was impossible for her to change it. Faith must go. She would find some way of making her see that she must. Out of weariness and shock and disappointment her tears began to flow again.

"But darling, how can you be willing to desert me? Just at the moment when Mamma needs you most. You don't know what I've been through. I haven't told you anything about the debts. Mamma hasn't wanted to worry you. But it has been a very expensive summer. I don't know what may happen to us if we cannot manage somehow to share expenses with Margaret and all be together. Mamma needs you. She has counted on you. Surely you don't want to refuse to do the very first thing that

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Mamma has ever asked of you. Who knows? It may be the very last."

Faith had risen and was standing looking down at her. Joel's look of hardness had gone from her. She was frightened, like a naughty child who knows that defiance is useless.

"I won't go," she was saying. "I belong here. You don't know what you're taking away from me. It's my whole life. I won't go, Mamma."

Naomi said nothing. It was sufficient to let reproach show in her grieved smile. After a moment, Faith ran from the room. When she heard the front door shut, Naomi let her hand slip from her side and drop to the floor. She was alone. Contrary to the Doctor's orders, Faith had left her alone. That would be hard for her to have to remember when she went to bed tonight. But it would help to discipline her into a proper attitude.

She began planning the move to Drummond. She did hope that it would not take Faith long to find work there. But Mr. Haddon had helped her when she went to Onondaga. No doubt he would help her again.

XIV

(August, 1890)

SHE beat her closed fists against her sides as she ran. It wasn't fair. . . . It wasn't fair. . . . They could not make her go to that dreadful place, to live with that odious man! She would not give up everything that she herself wanted: an education, work in the place she knew, among the people she loved. They could not take her so far away from John. There was no power on earth that could drag her. She would set her feet against the side of the house and hold on, screaming. She would beat her brains out against the pavement before she would allow herself to be taken a step of the way.

Why did everything have to be done for Margaret and Kathie and nothing for herself? Kathie had only to whine that she had been humiliated and Mamma would raise heaven and earth to get her away from the scene of her humiliation. It was all her own fault, too. Faith had known that Kathie was making herself ridiculous by pursuing a boy who had no interest in her at all. Yet if Faith were to tell Mamma that she could not leave John, Mamma would not take it seriously. Mamma had never believed that anyone would want to marry her. She would think that the whole thing about John was an illusion. But she wouldn't go; she wouldn't yield. They'd have to drag her to the station before the whole town. She would not give in weakly as she had about Mamma's going with her to Onondaga. For once she could have her own way.

Her head began to ache maddeningly. She must have been making herself conspicuous, running like this. Her step slowed down to a prim walk. Furtively she smoothed her hair and tried to think what she meant to do.

But all the images of herself, in which she had been indulging, got in the way of clear thought. She saw herself like St. Sebastian,

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with arrows as thick in her body as pins in Kathie's pincushion. She heard the echoes of those imagined screams, as she was dragged by an implacable Mamma through the streets of Meadville. The pictures frightened her, tantalized her, filled her with sardonic amusement at their grotesquerie. But they kept recurring. The face of St. Sebastian wearing the usual indulgent and aloof smile of gentle anguish became her own face. The image was so clear that she could scarcely restrain the impulse to lift her hands and push it away from her.

Something! . . . she must *do something!* There was no one in the world to whom she could talk. If only Mrs. Waldron were at home, she would have some suggestion to offer. But she was still in London and would soon be going on to Florence. Faith felt cut off from Mr. Haddon because she had not yet dared to confess that all her money from the summer's work had been turned over to Mamma. There was only Legh Haddon and since their talk about John, Faith had avoided seeing her. The memory of her own deliberate effort to drain Legh's mind of secrets was profoundly embarrassing.

Faith watched her small feet as the tips of her shoes came out from under the hem of her skirt. If she walked slowly and demurely enough, all the tumult within her might be stilled; her head might stop throbbing and her heart beating so painfully. But pictures of the life that she would be expected to live if she followed Mamma and Kathie to Drummond kept presenting themselves. Each one increased the passion of her resentment and the weight of her fear.

In Drummond she would have no ally: neither Buford nor John nor Legh. Only Poe Simpson who thought her a ridiculous bluestocking and Kathie who made remorseless sport of all her interests. Margaret had written miserable letters about the ugliness of the place where she lived, in sight of factories and cut off from the rest of the town by a section filled with saloons. Meadville seemed serene and beautiful in contrast. Faith realized, for the first time, that she had given too passive a love to these quiet streets, lying in the shade of ancient trees. Living in an imagined world, made romantic by scholarship; thinking of Athens and

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Rome and Florence as the only places where beauty presided, she had been too little aware of the loveliness all about her.

Now she wanted these scenes to be hers always. She thought of the little wandering back street that led up the hill to the vineyard that had once been Papa's. Never to see it again would be a little like dying. She faced the prospect of leaving Meadville with the same bleak bewilderment that came upon her sometimes when she faced the prospect of leaving life itself.

To live among strangers! . . . not to be able to say who lived in each house along the street seemed like an incredible deprivation. The nostalgia for a home that was not yet lost settled upon her.

Without the permission of her mind, her feet began hurrying again. She must talk to Legh. Nothing else could quiet her. Legh would say something sensible and reassuring. There must be something sensible to say. People who knew what they wanted to do were not made martyrs in the year 1890. After all, she was living in the Nineteenth century and in America; not in a time and in a country fond of martyrdom.

The front door of the Haddon house stood open, but Faith tapped gently with the knocker. Kathie, she knew, would have bounded across the threshold and into any room of the house that she wished to enter. But Faith, who had been there so many times oftener, still felt bound to honor the right of privacy. There was no answer, and, after a moment, she knocked again. It seemed curious that no one should be at home with the door standing open, but there was still no response. Faith turned desolately away.

She had gone half-way down the steps when John appeared on the porch, looking sleepy and dishevelled. He smiled at sight of her and followed her down the steps.

"I was looking for Legh," Faith explained.

"They've all gone for a picnic. I decided to stay home because I had some packing to do and some notes to write. I think I must have fallen asleep."

He laughed and rubbed his eyes like a little boy. Faith tried to smile. But the disappointment of missing Legh and the

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excitement of seeing John instead must, she felt, have turned the effort into a wry and ambiguous grimace. All the innocence had gone out of her relationship to John. A furtive and insistent hope knocked at her mind while she was with him, robbing her of the delicious confidence that she had once felt in his presence. It was a miserable beggar-hope, whining for love. She felt humiliated, stripped of dignity. Always to have so servile a companion in her heart, made her angry and uneasy. She feared betrayal and, at the same time, she longed to betray herself.

"Sit down on the steps and talk," John urged. Seeing that she hesitated, he added an implied plea. "I'm going tomorrow. After that, there will be only letters for weeks and weeks."

After that! Faith thought, and the irony felt like something bulky and bitter in her throat, choking her. She was jealous of him, too. That had never happened before and she hated the thought that gnawed at her mind. Life had been made so easy for him. He could have college without working for it and she could not.

But that was cruelly unfair to John. A flash of self-contempt rebuked her unreasonableness. John would share anything with her that he could. He had always been generous. But it was hard, hard, hard to remember to be fair to others when one was not being treated fairly oneself. Oh John, she thought, if I could only tell you.

She dropped wearily onto the porch. John folded up his long legs so that his chin could be propped on his knees. They sat for a moment in silence and then with his detached and impersonal air of considering all aspects of an abstract issue, he said:

"While I was packing, I thought a great deal about you, Faith. When you come to Cornell you ought to stay at Miss Mitford's boarding house. She's a very intellectual woman and a favorite with the members of the faculty. She has a sort of salon on Sunday evenings. It would be just the place for you."

He turned toward her in his eagerness. As their eyes met, Faith saw that he had sensed her inability to answer with a corresponding hopefulness. Her private misery lay between them like an

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embarrassing object that could not be explained. As he looked away, the color rose in John's cheeks.

"Of course, I suppose it's presumptuous of me to try to plan your life for you."

"It isn't that, John. You know it couldn't be that."

He was hurt and confused and a little childish. She would have to explain to him now. As she tried to find words that would be simple and direct and not too obviously designed to ask for his pity, an encompassing and enervating sense of oppression swept over her and about her. She wanted to yield luxuriously to her weakness and let John's unexhausted strength do all the work of lifting her above her fears.

"I shan't be going to Cornell. I shan't be going to college at all. Mamma is taking us west to live with Margaret. It's all settled."

The flat finality of her words had the effect that she had hoped they might have. John turned toward her, still flushed, but wearing now a look of resentment.

"You can't give up like that, Faith. You've always planned to go to college. Why, you were at the head of your class in high school. Everyone thinks you ought to go to college."

Even in the midst of her misery, she was amused at his boyish statement of the case. It was not quite as though she were still under orders from the teachers of the Meadville High School as John seemed to assume. But with a kind of fond perversity, she clung to her mood.

"There are so many things that make it impossible. I can't tell you about them, John. They have to do with my family."

"With your mother," he burst out angrily. "She's making you go. Why do you do it, Faith? You can't always let your mother dictate to you."

This was what she wanted to hear. His defiance intoxicated her. It ran fast in her blood, making her heart beat more furiously than before. Now, he would say something to her that would make it easier. If he would only say that he loved her, that would make her able to defy Mamma resolutely. He must speak now. With his love to support her, she could do anything.

She did not dare to look at him at all, but waited eagerly for

the sound of his voice saying the reckless things that she longed to hear. He might ask her to marry him immediately. She would not do it, of course. It would not be fair to interrupt his concentration on his work or to handicap her own. But just the saying of those incautious, generous words would be enough. She waited, hoping and longing until the tension had become almost unbearable. Why did he not begin? He must not be sensible and clear-headed now. She needed something else from him. Such a small thing! So easy for him to give, so easy for her gently to reject. But she must have it!

Finally it was impossible to refrain longer from looking at him. Their eyes met and she read in his face only bewilderment.

"Faith," he said, "I can't really urge you to leave your mother."

The tone was precise, almost like that of a reproachful school teacher. It was as though the original suggestion had come from her, not from him, and he was undertaking to rebuke her for an unruly impulse.

For a moment she was angry. John had forced her into a false position. He was a child with no strength to give her; a child towed with daytime sleep and quite unequal to the responsibility of helping her. But then the full awareness of what his caution implied swept over her like a vertigo. He was not going to tell her that he loved her. He had slipped back to the protection of his own youth and dependence, leaving her quite alone.

She could not endure sitting with him a moment longer. But no more could she get up and leave him with the admission that he had disappointed her. He would want from her the assurance that his way of looking at her situation was, as always, logical and right. If she left him now, whatever she said would ring in his ears like a confession that she had expected him to propose to her. She could only sit there and make the best of her humiliation until the interest of this interview had frayed out into boredom.

"I know," she said aloud. "That's what I told you. I have to go."

He stirred nervously beside her, stretching his long legs and scraping his heels against the gravel of the path.

"After all, you needn't give up college. There's a university out

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there in Drummond. You can go there and still be with your family."

"Yes," she said, "I can go there."

"We'll all be separated. Buford's going to Oxford. Legh will be at Smith. All in such different worlds. Do you know what we should do! We'll start a Round Robin. You know, each of us will write letters for all the others of the group to see."

He did not even want their private correspondence to continue. He was pushing her away from him completely. If she did not get away quickly, she would be sick right before him here on the steps. She must go, no matter what he thought.

She rose. "You must start it, John. The Round Robin I mean. I'll give Legh my address. It will be wonderful. I'll tell you all about the great new West. If I don't see you again before you leave: Good-bye."

Without waiting for his answer, she ran down the path. I must wait, until I get to the vineyard, she kept saying over and over to herself as she ran. I must wait. . . . I must.

The most malicious self-accusations kept crowding in upon her, threatening her determination not to be sick until she was out of sight of everyone. She was just like Kathie. She had thrown herself at John's head exactly as Kathie had thrown herself at Artie Holmes's. They had something in common at last. They were like two bad girls, without modesty or reticence or any understanding of their own absurdity. They would run away together and hide together and Faith would never again permit herself to feel superior.

As she plunged down the hill to the place where she had gone so often to escape, for a moment, from what she could not face, even the stimulation of calling herself names deserted her. She was conscious only of John's troubled, boyish look; conscious of the fact that she loved him; conscious of the fact that she had lost him. John, upon whom she had always counted, had shown with cruel clearness that he did not wish her to count on him at all. She had misunderstood; she had been betrayed by her hopes. In all the world only one appalling awareness remained: John did not love her.

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She lay on the grass not caring that she was sick or how she was sick. The image rose before her of the man she had once seen with Papa . . . the man who lay in the street, vomiting over his clothes. It didn't matter. . . . Nothing mattered now.

XV

(September, 1890)

FAITH stood watching Meadville diminish under her eyes as the train pulled away from the station. This was the end of all that she had known: an end to the quiet anticipation of tomorrow; an end to the love of familiar things; an end to the confidence that the confidence of others inspired. No longer could she expect to call up a clear image of Papa, brought vividly back by the sight of some scene along the roads over which they had driven so often together. No longer could she see her own destiny as sometimes she had seen it, as she lay in the vineyard under the trees. No longer could she think of John as having any place in her existence, even that of the sharer of long and revealing talks. All that was being swallowed up in the dot on the landscape which seemed to be retreating from her in the midst of smoke and clatter. It was going, losing its outline. Soon it would merge with the horizon and disappear completely. All that she had been was merging with that past. This was like a death, like George Eliot's dream of being blended once more with infinity.

She could not imagine how she would live in a new world. There would be nothing to give her spirit re-birth. All that she had deeply cherished must remain in the scene where Papa had urged her to love goodness and learning; where Mrs. Waldron had sat encouraging her ambition; where John had seemed to wish to share her eagerness and curiosity. How was it possible to coax such frail and undisciplined hopes and desires away from the place where they were born? She could not gather them up with straw valises and hat boxes, to take them away and set them up again in Poe Simpson's house, in Poe Simpson's world.

She had renounced everything, not John alone, or the friendships with Mr. Haddon and Mrs. Waldron and Buford, but all the bright associations with their names and their images. The

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sacrifice was complete. She went out from her world, taking as little as though she were going down into the grave itself. She had brought nothing into that world and it was very certain that she was taking nothing from it. She did not want even memories. They were of as little value to her now as graduation ribbons and debating society programs in a memory book. Meadville was going. Let it go! No link with it at all was better than the shadowy one that a teasing recollection could call up.

There had been a tumult of voices at the station to salute their departure. Kathie's friends had been there, Artie Holmes and Miriam Wilde among them. Kathie had hysterically dramatized the excitement of going to a new place. It had been sincerely echoed in many an eager voice. To be going anywhere was better than staying in the same place. Only Legh had known better. Only Legh had seemed to understand that finis was being written to a chapter in Faith's life. She had said nothing, but her face was tortured with the desire to cry as she had leaned forward to kiss Faith good-bye.

Faith had not permitted herself to cry. She refused to be rueful. She refused to remember. But even as she bit hard on the desire to cry out above the noise of the train, she remembered many things in a strange and maddening jumble: the glint of sunlight on the leaves in the vineyard; and the smell of chalk in Miss Henderson's classroom where she and John had met to discuss the problems of the debating society; and the look of Papa's face as he lay dying and calling out for Faith; and the feeling of the buggy bumping beneath her over country roads; and a fight she had once had with Kathie as they sat on the teeter-totter; and the scent of Mrs. Waldron's dress as they sat reading together; and the way Mr. Haddon bounced out of his little office and ushered her back into it; and the look of the Athenaeum filling up with people for a lecture; and John standing in the half light of dusk urging her not to go to hear Julia Ward Howe; and the intimate look of the streets of Meadville with the big trees drooping down over them.

No other place can ever be home, she thought. I've lost everything . . . everything. And then she knew that everything meant

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really just John. If he were beside her, going to a new world, she might feel the challenge of it. Some association with John was the thing that struck at her out of her memories. It was over! Her life was over! Let her think it firmly and without flinching! If she were tricked again into any enthusiasm, it could only be to discover at last that it was empty of satisfaction because John had no part in it. He had let her go and she would permit nothing to matter to her any more.

She heard Mamma rustling beside her. "Come and speak to Kathie," she urged. "Read to her. Do something. She has begun to realize that she will miss Meadville. She's crying so piteously. We must do something to distract her."

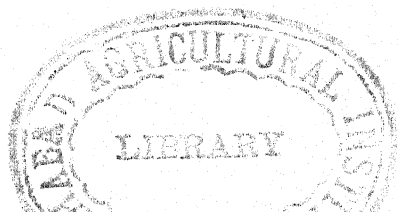
Yes, Kathie could cry. She was the cause of their going. Kathie was losing something that she had never really had. She could cry lightly and piteously and be easily consoled. All right! Let those for whom there is consolation take it! She would read to Kathie. She would devote the rest of her life to Kathie in a fury of sacrifice.

Then all at once the supporting resentment of her resolution collapsed. She was conscious only of the need to receive comfort and give it. She dropped her head onto Mamma's shoulder and began to cry.

II

HIGH-NOON

“O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon. . . .”



I

(September, 1890)

FAITH woke refreshed. Sunlight streamed in at the edges of the drawn curtains, seeming to ridicule her desire for darkness. As she lay in bed, studying the shaft of brightness that lay across the floor, she realized that she wanted to be alone no longer.

She had arrived in Drummond a week before with no impulse at all but to find protection against this new life which she had no readiness to live. Her only awareness had been of a throbbing confusion of pain and resentment; her only desire had been for a dark corner in which to hide. Of silence and sickness she had made the last strongholds of her retreat. The life of Margaret's household went on about her. Margaret herself, looking pale and lovely, came often to her room, trying to tempt her to eat, pathetically determined to make her hospitality attractive. But Faith had cherished the headache that gave her the right to draw the curtains close and refuse to look at her new world.

But now her curiosity had reasserted itself. She wanted to see what lay beyond the curtains. Forgetting the weakness of her long fast, she threw back the sheet and got shakily to her feet. At the window, the heat of the Wisconsin September steamed up about her, offering neither comfort nor assurance. On the horizon rose the chimneys of factories, startlingly close. In Meadville the strict seclusion of the residential district had been sacred. The nearness of these factories seemed like a wilfully impertinent invasion.

It was going to be hard to like Drummond. It was going to be hard to like living with Poe Simpson. But as she stood drawing her breath with difficulty in the stifling air, Faith felt almost glad that all the circumstances of her new life were charmless. She accepted the challenge eagerly.

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"Whoever said that life must be made easy for Faith Winchester?"

She spoke the words aloud, and as she did so, a clear image of Papa's face came before her eyes. He smiled down gravely as he had done so often when they were driving together in the old days.

She clasped her hands tight. At least Papa had not been left behind in Meadville. He could still give her, out of the richness of his spirit, the resolution that she needed. Here in Drummond she would live as Papa would want her to live. She would not think of John or Meadville or anything that was lost. She would make a good life of what Drummond offered. That was all that mattered. If she created a good life out of unpromising material so much the better. Papa would be the better pleased.

Her appearance at breakfast interrupted the gossip about Meadville that had been filling the house ever since their arrival. From her bed, Faith had heard it running like a maddeningly insistent obligato through all of Margaret's and Mamma's conversation. Their nostalgia was worse than her own.

Yet now as Faith took her place at the table Mamma looked up with an eagerness that in no way suggested a preoccupation with the past.

"I do believe my dear girl is going out to find work this morning." Mamma spoke with the delicate emphasis of one who hopes to underscore the desirability of a decision by assuming that it has been made already.

Margaret laid a hand on Faith's. "Darling, do you think you should go out so soon? It's miserably hot and you've been really sick."

Mamma smiled indulgently. "My dear, I think you've forgotten what our dear Faith is like. She can't be happy unless she's working."

A timid, placative smile crossed Margaret's face. Something had happened to her since she had left Meadville. Much of her old assertiveness was gone. It was clear that she wished still to protest but did not dare to do so. Faith settled the issue for her by reassuring Mamma that she felt quite well again.

"I'm going to present these this morning," she said, holding up the letters of introduction written for her by Mr. Haddon.

Poe Simpson reached forward and took the one that lay on top. He read the address: "David Fraser, Esq. The Drummond Argus." As he caught Faith's eye, a patronizing smile twisted his lips into their favorite expression of complacency. "You'll have to use all your arts to lure a job out of him. I've heard Dave swear that he'd never hire a woman."

"Do people out here really pride themselves on being bigoted?" Faith asked. "I thought the West was supposed to be free of that sort of thing."

She hated Poe Simpson. Oh, no, hate was much too strong a word. She had a complete contempt for his cheap habit of mind. He wanted to undermine her courage simply to satisfy his masculine pride. He hoped that she would find a job and contribute money to his shabby household. And yet he enjoyed trying to frighten her. Probably that was the only way he knew to assert his importance. Already he had intimidated Margaret. But he should very soon be made to understand that he must keep hands off the life of Margaret's sister. That did not belong to him.

"I'll drive you overtown and introduce you to Dave myself." Poe Simpson smiled blandly as though to suggest that he took a tolerant view of Faith's girlish whim about finding a job.

But she could not let him do that! Surely, there could be no worse recommendation in the world than to be sponsored by Poe Simpson. Faith studied him closely. It was certainly true that he had changed for the worse. The air of jauntiness that he had once worn still existed, but it was like an old garment, frayed and faded. She did not want Poe Simpson with her when she talked to Mr. Fraser.

"Thank you," she said aloud. "But I'd rather go alone. I think it's always better to stand on one's own feet."

Poe Simpson shrugged his shoulders. "Just as you say . . . only don't let him frighten you to death."

An hour later he put her down in front of the Argus building. The trip from Margaret's house had brought them through a curious variety of scenes: an old residence district that reminded

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her reassuringly of Meadville; a business section where the factories crowded in once more; across a river from which rose a soothing breeze; and, finally, into a business section, again. Faith had tried to give her attention to the quickly changing background. But the excitement of the prospective interview really engaged her mind. As she stepped from the carriage, resolution had nearly gone from her. Only the urgent need to declare herself free from Poe Simpson's patronage kept her from clinging to his hand as he helped her down.

"Quite sure you wouldn't like me to go up with you?" he asked again.

Faith hesitated. It was dismal to be alone. But if she spoke now it would be to cry out to Poe Simpson for protection. She had the superstitious conviction that one moment's yielding would destroy her forever. She would be what Margaret had become: a defeated creature with no chance of creating a good life for herself. This first test of her resolution was important. If she could succeed with Mr. Fraser, make him notice her, make him give her a job . . . , then she could have confidence once more. She would know that she was capable of living richly, even without John. The excitement of contest stirred so disturbingly in her that her throat felt constricted. She must succeed! She must remake her life, if not for her own sake, then for Papa's! Papa had believed in her. She must not crumple up as Margaret had done. That would be to defeat Papa as well as herself.

Poe Simpson laughed as she shook her head. He climbed back into the carriage and drove away, shaking his whip at her with a brave show of his old jauntiness.

Faith turned and studied the Argus building. It rose high and narrow above the street. On the second floor a huge bay window bulged out, as though it were the eye of Argus, keeping watch on the activities of the men and women in the street below. It had a look of awful clairvoyance. Faith imagined that it had already seen her fear. To escape from it, she hurried into the building.

A sign directed her to the editorial offices on the second floor. Not daring to pause on any pretext, even that of straightening

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her hat before a mirror in the hall, she began to climb. She was breathless when she reached the top stair.

Her eyes had been closed as she climbed. Now as she opened them, to find her way to the editorial rooms, she stopped short, confused by a curious scene. She was inside the horrible eye that she had seen from the street. The fancy occurred to her that she had passed, like Alice, into some Wonderland where everything was topsy-turvy. She recognized a few of the familiar aspects of a newspaper office. But the unlikenesses to Mr. Haddon's editorial room were far more noticeable than the likenesses.

Here desks were littered with newspapers as Mr. Haddon would never have permitted desks to be littered. Men sat with chairs tipped back at precarious angles; cigars in the corners of their mouths; straw hats tilted off their foreheads; suspenders thrown down from shoulders. The whole look of the place was of incredible disorder. Faith felt as though she had intruded into a barracks and that there was nothing to do but run downstairs before she was discovered.

But she realized that she had been discovered and that her appearance had thrown these men into a state of bewilderment as great as her own. During an instant that seemed to become as permanent as eternity, they stared at her. Then, all at once, there was a scraping of chairs; a sudden leaping to upright positions as though all these creatures had been jerked by invisible strings. At the same time, one of them detached himself from the group and came toward her. There was a queer unreality to the movement of his body. It seemed slow and strangely rhythmic as though the man were swimming through an unfamiliar element. Faith watched him fascinated.

He was standing beside her, now, and she saw that he was a big, shambling, untidy man with drooping shoulders. Only his height distinguished him from the others. Like them he was in shirt-sleeves. His white wash tie had slipped from place and was twisted under his collar. A lock of black hair hung over his forehead and as he looked down at her he reached for it abstractedly and began curling it round and round his finger.

But there was something reassuring about his look of gentle,

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impassive solidity. He was smiling at her with a kind of impersonal warmth such as she had always received from Buford and John and Mr. Haddon. But there was a difference, too. He was older than John and younger than Mr. Haddon. There was a sort of distinction to his rugged features. He was almost handsome. If he were brushed and pulled together, he would be a striking-looking man, in his spare and wiry strength.

"Were you looking for someone?" he asked in a voice so deep that it recalled Faith to reality and to her fright, as well.

"For Mr. Fraser," she managed to say.

"I'm David Fraser."

She had hoped that this might be the man that she had come to see. But surprise at finding him so unlike the image called up by her fear made her stare incredulously.

"Let's go somewhere else and talk," Mr. Fraser urged helpfully.

He led her downstairs, toward a bench that stood just inside the front door. When they were seated he spoke again.

"You needn't be afraid of me." He was twisting the lock of hair faster now. His eyes were alight with humor. "I was the youngest child of a huge Scotch family. I've known every kind of bullying that the human animal can invent and I've no desire to practice any kind at all." His expression sobered and he asked with a look almost of suspicion, "Are you looking for work?"

She must be business-like now. It was not fair to herself to let him think her a fool. She swallowed hard and nodded.

"I've had a year and a half of general experience. I've reported the sessions at Onondaga . . . in New York state, you know . . . for a syndicate of papers. I've had every sort of assignment."

"Any murders? hangings?"

She looked up sharply, feeling a twinge of resentment. But there was admiration rather than patronizing indulgence in his smile. She laughed and said primly: "We don't have them in Meadville . . . or at Onondaga. But I should have been able to report them if there had been any need."

Mr. Fraser laughed pleasantly. She seized upon the implied

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encouragement as an excuse for presenting her letters of introduction.

"These will tell you what I've done," she said.

His hand received the letters but he did not open them. For a moment he sat in silence. Then he turned toward her, looking sober and almost sad.

"We do have murders here and hangings and brawls in saloons and thieving mayors and all kinds of things you've never heard of. You can hardly do general reporting, here, without running into that kind of thing."

He looked at her with the apologetic manner of one who asks for reasonable understanding in a hopeless situation. But she had no intention of letting him off so easily. She would not crawl away and pretend to be grateful for this polite dismissal. She faced him bravely.

"Mr. Fraser, I think I can guarantee two things: that I should never ask for special consideration as a woman and that I'd never come back without a story. I wish you'd give me a chance to prove to you. . . ."

His eyes had widened in surprise as she made her declaration and then softened again into a smile.

"It isn't that I question your ability. I simply can't imagine sending a girl like you into the places our reporters have to go. Of course, there is the society news. Our women want their weddings and receptions and club news covered. . . ."

The apologetic tone crept into his voice once more.

"Oh yes, I've done all that. I'd be glad. . . ." Faith began.

But she saw that he was no longer giving her his attention. Her glance followed his toward the stairs. Two men came running down, pulling on their coats. Mr. Fraser rose and went toward them. Twisting her fingers miserably in her lap, Faith wondered if she had been completely forgotten. The excited talk of the men reached her clearly. She listened, burdened with envy for the fact that they lived in a world which was their own; one which they served with the same excitement she had felt when she worked for Mr. Haddon in Meadville.

"It's started, Dave," the older of the two men was saying.

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"They've closed down the Murdoch plant indefinitely as a disciplinary measure because the men protested against wage cuts. There's a hell of a demonstration going on. Women and children in the crowd along with the men."

"Well, get on over there, fast." Mr. Fraser urged the reporters toward the door and then reached out to detain them. "Just a minute, Frank. Get ahold of Jacobsen, the foreman. He'll talk. Perry, you do me a color story. Let Frank handle the rest. But make it rich and juicy. I'm going to play this up big and bust the damn town wide open."

The three men moved together toward the door. As they passed the bench where Faith sat, she caught Mr. Fraser's eye. He looked at her so challengingly that she rose to her feet, not knowing what she meant to do, but determined to be ready for anything. When he called to her, she had to restrain the impulse to glance over her shoulder to make sure that his words were not really addressed to someone else.

"There's a woman's angle to a big story that's broken on the south side. Want to go along?"

"Of course," she called back. Her voice sounded strange to her own ear. The desire to seem ready and resourceful had given a shrill emphasis to her tone.

"Then, run after them." At the door Mr. Fraser called to the two reporters. "Frank! Perry! Take her along."

Presently Faith found herself seated in a cab between two men who obviously resented her presence. Her explanation, that she was being given a chance as a reporter, seemed only to deepen their distrust.

"Know anything about the trouble we've been having lately?" the older of the two men demanded with a surly contempt that he made no effort to conceal.

"I came to Drummond only a week ago," Faith confessed.

"Then, why is Dave sending you out on a story like this? Don't you even know that the Trust Company has been hounding the small businesses that have been hit by the hard times and that everyone's madder than a goat about it?"

"Well, I know now." Faith's placative smile was wasted upon

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the older reporter. But as her glance wavered toward the one whom Mr. Fraser had called Perry she felt in him a shy concern for her plight.

The reporter named Frank went on angrily: "The Trust Company has just been taking advantage of bad times to appropriate a lot of businesses that would have been all right if they'd been given a little intelligent help. They've cut down wages and thrown out men with families and this morning they went so far as to close down one of the companies with the largest pay-roll. Wages have always been low enough and, now that even the little they had is being taken from them, the men have gone crazy. That's about all I can tell you."

"You've been very kind," Faith assured him. "Thank you."

The man tilted his straw hat back from his forehead and looked at her with a curious mixture of confusion and resentment.

"I don't know whether I've been kind or not. But I can tell you this, young lady: once we get there, it'll be every man for himself."

"I shouldn't expect any more help."

A block from the Murdoch knitting mills, they had to let the cab go. It could push no farther through the streets filled with excited men and women. Not all of them were angry. Some obviously found the unexpected excitement of the occasion enormously to their liking. Children dashed back and forth through the crowds, calling to one another and giving the scene the irrelevant gaiety of circus day.

The younger reporter had disappeared almost as soon as they left the cab. Faith followed meekly at the other man's heels hoping to be led to the mill. But presently she heard him call out: "Jacobsen! Just a minute," and plunge through the crowd.

She pushed on up the street and came after a moment upon a scene that reminded her of a Sunday school card depicting the Fall of Jericho. All about the walls of the Murdoch plant men and women were gathered, their thick ragged lines, pressing in against the thin line of the police. The ropes which the officers held were merely a moral deterrent. The crowds jostled half-

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jocularly against them. The violence which she and the other reporters from the Argus had come to see had evidently subsided with the arrival of the police. But still the line of men and women pushed slowly round and round the walls as though they hoped to bring them down by the force of their moral disapproval.

Faith moved along the edge of the crowd, allowing herself to be jostled while she listened intently to the comments of the men and women beside her.

Near her a boy with a bleating tenor voice began to sing: "We'll hang Bill Murdoch to a sour apple tree." There was a chorus of protests: "Shut up, you damn fool. Bill Murdoch's out of a job like the rest of us." "What's the matter with Bill Murdoch? He's all right." "Aw, you can't tell me, Bill didn't get his before the Trust Company took over."

The bleating tenor began again. But the singer had got no farther than the assertion that he would hang Bill Murdoch when there was the sound of a blow. A deep voice shouted out above the confusion: "You damn puppy, I tell you Bill's all right."

The line was immediately in confusion. Men pushed to get nearer to the fight and pushed to get away from it. An eddy of writhing human beings, caught up in the ecstasy of fright, whirled Faith about and finally cast her out of the line. She found herself standing beside an angry girl who held a crying baby in her arms.

"You damn fools," the girl shouted in undefined protest. "You goddamn fools!"

Then, dissatisfied with the release offered by her profanity, she turned and addressed herself to Faith.

"What do they care if the mill is closed! What do they care if their jobs are gone! They've got a fight to watch and that's enough to make them forget everything else." She flung the child from one shoulder to the other as she turned to glare at Faith. "I worked there for five years and my husband has worked there ever since he was a kid. But they can take our living away from us any time they damn please. Makes you so mad you'd like to tear the whole place down."

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Faith watched with distress while the tempest of the girl's anger tore through her. It seemed shocking that a complete stranger should be willing to expose herself so shamelessly.

"Please," Faith urged as the girl began once more to fling the child angrily about in her arms, "don't handle the baby that way." Then suddenly she, too, was angry. "Can't you see he's frightened to death?"

The girl jerked away from the hand that Faith had laid upon her arm. "He'll be frightened a damn sight worse after he's starved for a week or two. It drives me crazy. I'd like to heave a brick through every window in the place."

"Then let me hold the baby while you heave them."

It was her own voice that Faith heard screaming above the confusion all about her. The sound excited her. She had become an actor in this extraordinary drama. She was not merely an observer of this crazy world; she was its interpreter. It was the job that she had been sent to do.

This was a crazy world into which she had been flung, full of frightened people, people in the grip of despair. But they were fighting for their lives, no matter how stupidly. That was something that she would never have seen in Meadville. John would be shocked by this scene. He would be completely at a loss in the midst of it because it did not call for logical discussion and calm appraisal of values.

Against the body of the struggling baby she felt her shoulders straighten with exultant defiance. Papa would have understood what she was feeling. If you could have any share at all in making life good, you should be grateful.

This was a better life than the one she had left behind.

"Leo!" she heard the girl beside her cry out. A man had been pushed out of the circle that pressed about the police guard. He was on the ground. The girl ran toward him. Holding the baby close in her arms, Faith plunged after her.

II

(October, 1890)

CLICK EVANS appeared at the door of her little office, his grimy face wearing its habitual expression of Puckish challenge. Life in the newspaper office had taught the office boy to look for a practical joke behind every order. He had developed a mask of amused incredulity to be worn always while on duty.

"Dave wants you in the City Room, Miss Winchester."

Faith gathered up her skirts and edged through the narrow passage-way between her typewriter desk and the wall.

"Thank you, Click," she said, wondering once more if the stress she laid upon her own formal politeness would ever suggest to the office boy that his own manner was much too casual. It shocked her to hear him call the Managing Editor, "Dave."

But Mr. Fraser himself was really responsible. Human beings were simply human beings to him and one was as interesting and important as another. He made no distinction between himself and the men, despite the fact that he was so much better educated than most of them. His discipline was completely casual. On matinee days the whole staff seemed to retire to the Grand Opera House and the paper somehow got itself edited from the back row of the orchestra circle. Mr. Fraser was often there. But the justification of his technique lay in the fact that it produced an exciting paper. The Argus made Mr. Haddon's journalistic ideas seem as stimulating as a dozen pages chosen at random from the encyclopedia.

As she walked down the long corridor toward the City Room, Faith felt, once more, the exciting satisfaction of living in a world where things happened. In just one month, here in Drummond, she had had more significant assignments than she had had in the whole of her service under Mr. Haddon in Meadville. There had, of course, been nothing else as important as the Murdoch

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story. It would be unreasonable to expect that sort of chance to come every day. . . . The Trust Company had been forced to open up the plant again and everyone gave the Argus its share of credit for making those stubborn old men surrender.

There was a curious quiet about the City Room as she approached it. Faith had been in the habit of keeping her eyes downcast when she went to the desk to look at the assignment book. This place had been, for so long, the men's inviolable sanctum that they could not change, all at once, the embarrassingly dishevelled life that they lived in it. It was her duty to see as little as possible when she intruded. But, today, the silence of the City Room seemed somehow like a challenge. Faith glanced up to meet it.

The men were ranged in a row before the big window. At a signal from Mr. Fraser, they began to sing: "Happy birthday to you." They were deliberately burlesquing the breathless intonation of kindergarten children.

But it was not her birthday! Whose? Faith wondered looking about in confusion.

As though in answer to the question, Mr. Fraser stepped toward her.

"Yes, it is your birthday, Miss Winchester," he said; "the first month of your service to the Argus has been completed. We're celebrating the conclusion of your apprenticeship. Step here, please. Do you mind showing these depraved hangmen and criminals, whom I am reluctantly obliged to use as a staff, just what the blush of modesty looks like? It's at least twenty years since even the youngest of them has seen such a phenomenon and I want them to study it closely."

Faith's heart pounded wildly as she crossed the room and stood before him. From behind his back, Mr. Fraser produced a package and held it toward her.

"This," he said, "is for the author of the best color story that ever appeared in the Argus."

He spoke with his customary gentleness, now, abandoning the mood of satire. But still a rich undertone of amusement sounded in his voice. It was for his manner, much more than for his

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praise, that Faith felt grateful. As they stood facing each other, the hands of both still on the package, they seemed to have a bond between them. But it was the enveloping warmth of his generosity that really enclosed them. He spoke to her with the casual intimacy that he used in addressing the men. He had accepted her. She belonged to this world, this exciting world! The tang of its robust good-will was hers to breathe, freely. Faith felt the salty sting of tears in her eyes.

Mr. Fraser stepped back into the line and Frank Judson immediately took his place. He, too, put a parcel in Faith's hands.

"Miss Winchester," he announced brusquely, "though I have known you only a very short time, I have twice been moved to utter despair by you. The first time was when I found you beside me in the cab, driving out to the Murdoch plant. I didn't know what I was expected to do with a lady at a riot. The second time . . .," he paused smiling ruefully, "was when I opened the paper the next morning and discovered that you had written a story just ten times more alive than mine."

Frank Judson turned toward Mr. Fraser.

"But I wasn't the only one who was humiliated. You never saw such a crestfallen man as Dave that morning. He always said there was no such creature as a good newspaper woman. He came up to Perry and me as we were talking about your story. I can still see the look of abject surrender on his face when he said: 'Well, boys, I guess we'll have to keep this one.'"

The others crowded around her, each with a gift to add to the pile in her arms. There were even a few outsiders. Ben Stanford, looking like an actor with a big, ruby stickpin in his glossy cravat, had come to present her with a box for the Saturday evening performance at the Grand Opera House.

Faith's excitement subsided. She was able at last to thank the men as they came up, with their little speeches ready. Each offered a compliment neatly enclosed in mockery. It was the trick that they habitually used with each other, to make approval sound almost like abuse. To hear this accent of friendship directed toward herself was exhilaratingly sweet. Where had she ever received such friendship before? Not from Legh. Not from

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John himself. John did not know, as these men did, that friendship should contain raillery and understanding and belief in a strong, exciting mixture. Life in Meadville had been meager, almost barren, compared with the exuberance that she found here.

Faith felt her shoulders lifting. The arms in which gifts had been piled raised themselves in a spontaneous gesture of receptiveness, feeling their burden become light. She wanted to put off all rigidity. The fearfulness that she had brought out of Meadville should have been left there. It did not belong to this generous world.

The ceremony was over at last. Faith loaded her presents into Click Evans' arms to be carried to her own office. Then abruptly Frank Judson called out:

"Just a minute. There's one thing more."

He pulled from his pocket a little silver bell on a purple cord.

"Miss Winchester," he said, as he hung the bell around her neck, "your fellow workers have just one complaint to make of you. You've never fallen down on an assignment and you're scrupulous about deadlines. But you don't make noise enough."

A howl of laughter greeted this unexpected addition to the ceremony.

"It was very gallant of Dave to make that little cell for you out of a coat closet where there hasn't been an offensive breath of fresh air in forty years. It saves you the embarrassment of having to live too close to hangmen and criminals. But we'd like to be able to hear you coming down the hall so that we can sweep up the profanity and dump it out of the window. Maybe do a little light fumigating. So please just wear this bell as a charm against us."

On the wake of the men's tide of laughter, Faith was able to slip from the City Room. Click Evans piled the packages neatly on her desk.

"They're a great bunch of joshers, ain't they?" the boy commented, eager to identify himself with the men in appreciation of their wit. At the same time he wanted to identify himself with Faith in what he imagined to be her air of superior indulgence.

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But she felt no such indulgence, only a deep gratitude for the sense of having come into an inheritance.

Sitting at her desk she touched one package after another. They were mostly books. She would keep these volumes on a shelf by themselves as a reminder of the moment when she had received a certificate of membership in her new world.

She opened Mr. Fraser's book first of all. It contained the complete works of Robert Browning. Faith turned back the handsome leather cover and there beneath it was a sheet of paper across which Mr. Fraser had scratched out something in his own sprawling hand. She smiled with sympathy for the printers who must puzzle out the editorials that he wrote in longhand. There was a story of one who prided himself upon his ability to translate any sentence, however difficult. Only once he had had to concede defeat. He had come downstairs to admit that he could make nothing of a certain line. It seemed to read: "'Tis two, 'tis fifty and fifty 'tis, 'tis two."

But as she studied the page closely she saw that Mr. Fraser had written a sonnet, setting down the lines raggedly. The first words to take definite shape were in the third line: "Crowned with a nimbus of gold hair." With a start of surprise, she realized that the sonnet was addressed to her. She was a priestess "walking demurely and garlanded with grace." . . . She bent over the page eager now to find the clue to the whole meaning.

While she sat in deep concentration, a large hand reached across the desk and took hold of the page. She looked up into Mr. Fraser's face and flushed at the thought that he had discovered her in a betrayal of eager greed for praise. But it was clear, as their eyes met, that he was even more confused than she.

"Would you let me take it back? I hoped you hadn't looked at it yet."

It seemed like a repudiation of his generosity and she surrendered the page to him. He stood holding it tentatively as though he had half hoped that she would refuse to give it up.

"I'm afraid that as a sonneteer I have all the lithesome grace of a circus elephant. It isn't good enough."

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"Not good enough for you?" she asked, surprised that so exuberant a man should betray a timorous vanity.

But she saw immediately that she had not been fair to him. "Not good enough for you," he insisted.

Faith reached out her hand. "Then, let me have it again. I want it very much."

He handed the poem back with a laugh. She recognized the unmistakable reverberation of relief. "I thought you might consider it an impertinence. As a poem it can't command indulgence for itself. William Shakespeare Fraser sometimes falls below the highest standards of the sonnet. I don't so much lisp in numbers as limp in them. I'm a kind of stricken pachyderm trumpeting about my sensibilities. But the impulse was honest."

"My only complaint is your penmanship. I wish you'd read the poem to me."

Mr. Fraser laughed. "That would be too much like asking a man to build his own scaffold and tie the noose around his own neck."

A look of discomfort, almost of anxiety, crossed his face as he spoke. Hitching a chair forward with an awkward movement of the foot, he placed it beside her desk and sat down. A frown obscured his habitual air of friendliness. He twisted his forelock round and round his finger.

"There's something I want to tell you, Miss Winchester," he said at last. "I meant it about our never having had so good a human interest story as the one you wrote about the trouble at the Murdoch plant. The ordinary reporter gets into a rut after a few years. It wouldn't occur to him to write a story from the inside of the mind of a human being involved in the trouble. You did a really original piece of work."

"I wanted so much to please you. I'm glad if I succeeded."

"You did." He sat silent for a moment and then as though with an effort he brought his eyes back to hers. "What I have to tell you is something of which I'm very much ashamed. You see we were too successful. The play we gave the story intimidated the trustees into opening up the plant again. They were afraid to run against public feeling once it had been roused.

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But now they're going out after the legal means of doing the same sort of thing right over again. We've been ordered to co-operate editorially with their plan for putting through an amendment to the charter that will give them more power than ever."

Her first response was one of childish confusion. She could not think who would be in a position to give instructions to Mr. Fraser.

"Ordered! But by whom?" she asked.

"Senator Hawkins. You don't know him yet. But you will. He's very bland and charming. The very model of a United States Senator. The sort we like to send to Washington to show that we're civilized out here. And beneath his charm lies a complete indifference to the interests of any one but Senator Hawkins and his friends. This is his paper. . . ." Mr. Fraser ended with a shrug.

Faith felt her brows drawn together in a deeper bewilderment. "But I don't understand. The Trust Company is making people poor by cutting wages. That can't be good for a community. And everyone says these little businesses could go on if they were helped a little."

Mr. Fraser sighed. "The economic policy of the Trust Company is firmly rooted in the acquisitive instinct."

"It's horrible," Faith protested. "I was in the house of the family I wrote about. I saw how they have to live. They're wretchedly poor at best. If the Trust Company is allowed to take possession of every business and reduce wages still farther . . . it's slavery. . . ."

"Something very like it."

Faith drew her hands back from the top of the desk and clenched them in her lap. "Why do people tolerate it? They could do something if they would."

"Senator Hawkins has a theory about that. In one of his more confiding moments he once told me that the public is an ass. Sometimes I think he's right."

"That's what made my friends at the Murdoch plant so angry: being treated as though they hadn't ordinary intelligence."

Mr. Fraser settled himself comfortably in his chair. It was

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clear to Faith that he had escaped from the embarrassment that his confession had first caused. He was now enjoying his detached examination of the public mind.

"People are genuinely interested in nothing but prize fights and football. Give them enough of both and they won't bother anyone much about justice."

"It's the ancient principle of bread and circuses for the Roman mob, isn't it?"

"Exactly! Of course, no one goes so far as to offer the modern mob bread. Football's quite enough."

Mr. Fraser's expression became one of the utmost gravity.

"At the University, you know, the faculty is gathered around the head coach as natural leader. The mere professors are required to report to him every morning. Only last year seven members of Greek departments were discharged from American institutions for making inspired quarterbacks so nervous that they could not play their game."

Faith smiled and Mr. Fraser warmed to his theme.

"It would not surprise me at all if Congress were asked to appropriate money for football. They could bring the matter before the committee as a Project for the Deepening of Alimentary Canals."

Mr. Fraser's eyes had wandered from her as he talked. Faith realized that she had become simply an audience for his bright improvisation. But beneath the surface intention of being witty, she was sure that she made out another. It lay deeply embedded in his mind, but it was there. He resented being given orders which did violence to the justice and gentleness of his temper. It was to distract himself from the tragic betrayal of his best intentions that he indulged in verbal fireworks.

When he turned toward her again, after a moment's silence, she saw with unquestionable certainty that she had been right. His face looked suddenly aged and very sad.

"You know, Miss Winchester," he went on, "all the moralists have their theories about what is debasing American character and robbing it of the virtues of the pioneers. I might as well have my theory, too. I think that the poison that is corrupting

us is sheer good temper. Far too many people are willing to sacrifice their principles in the interest of bonhomie. The tariff baron who travels to Washington to work against the principle of free trade gives out interviews of a humorous character in which he declares that the tariff should be revised. He does not say that he would have it revised upward because he has a horror of making much of a small matter. The jolly public, to which the truth has always been a trifle, laughs good-naturedly at his sallies and forgets his intentions . . . as he has intended that they should be forgotten."

With a vague feeling of guilt like that of the eavesdropper, Faith realized that Mr. Fraser was talking really to himself. It was against his own good-temper that these reproaches were directed. Mr. Fraser also laughed at Senator Hawkins' sallies and forgot his intentions. There could be no other interpretation of his willingness to accept tyrannical orders without a struggle. Mr. Fraser disliked himself for his weakness and wished to confess that dislike. He was revealing himself to her because of the excitement with which she had presented the case of the people at the Murdoch plant. Perhaps as her employer, he resented a little the embarrassment she had caused him. Now he wished to apologize for that resentment and explain it.

Still, he had spoken as one human being to another. There was no hint of arbitrary authority in his tone. Surely, she had a right to answer as a human being.

"What I've been thinking," she said slowly, "is this: Supposing people are stupid, shouldn't they be protected all the more carefully? Isn't there a principle of abstract justice from which we can't escape?"

Mr. Fraser rose. "Perhaps we can't escape from principles like that, but we can be arbitrarily and very rudely severed from them. I'm afraid you've come into a bad world, Miss Winchester . . . the kind in which you can have a job, or you can have principles. If you can find a world in which it is possible to have both, let's go to it together."

Long after he had left her, Faith sat fingering the page on which he had written his poem.

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He was a strange man . . . strange and sad and disturbing. This awareness of him cast a deep shadow over her view of the new world in which she had been glad, a moment before, to feel that she had a share. It was not enough to feel friendship, to enjoy a close alliance with one's immediate kind. Not nearly enough. The good-will of men like Mr. Fraser and those others in the City Room was meaningless if it were not extended to include people like those at the Murdoch plant. Surely it couldn't be true that any world was so cruel as to reject the good life, cynically and with its eyes open. People had only to be shown what was best in order to want it devotedly. Here in Drummond, where life was plastic, it was most important that principles should not be neglected. The rigidity of Meadville mattered less because there life had long since taken form: a good, placid, peace-loving form. But here there were struggles still to be gone through. No one could deliberately turn his back on duty, least of all a generous man like David Fraser. She would not believe it of him.

If only she could make him understand what Papa had once said about being an excellent soul. That was what David Fraser was meant to be . . . an excellent soul. He had said that no one could have his work and his principles, too. But that was wrong. He could not be permitted to reject either. So fine a man could not make a decision like that. He mustn't be permitted to do it. She would not permit it. She wouldn't. . . .

The hands that held the poem closed spasmodically. The paper was crumpled. Shocked at what she had done, Faith began to smooth the page out before her.

III

(October, 1890)

DAVE FRASER sat with his brother Joe on the back porch of Joe's scrupulously neat little house. Their mother sat enfolded in her usual matriarchal silence. Joe's wife, Effie, peeled potatoes for dinner on the bench beside her mother-in-law.

Effie was an extraordinarily fine woman, Dave told himself. It was incredible with what patience she endured all the trials of her life. She kept her rooms swept within an inch of the carpet's life and paid for most of the upkeep of her family out of the profits of her millinery business. Joe was a good worker when he would work at all. But most of the time he was serenely content to let Effie support him. She never complained of Joe's self-indulgence. Nor did she complain of her mother-in-law, who had a gypsy love of wandering from house to house, drinking endless cups of tea, hinting broadly for a dash of rum in each one. The board that Dave paid for himself and his mother was the only certain help that Effie had. Yet her tiny domain was spotless and always perfectly ordered.

Dave wished that he could admire Effie just a little more. The truth was that a kind of resentment always crept into any tribute that he paid her. Whenever he imagined himself married to such a woman he felt a wave of actual dislike. It was Effie's highly competent mindlessness that antagonized him.

With a sigh, Dave turned toward his brother. For Joe he felt the complete sympathy of one unregenerate sluggard for another. Joe was lazy, so lazy that he would not even take the trouble to speak intelligibly. But the minds and tempers of the brothers were so perfectly attuned that one could complete the other's thought with only a hint of what it had started to be.

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Joe shook out the pages of the Drummond Argus and faced Dave, muttering through half closed lips.

"Couldn't hear a word you said, Joe," Dave answered absently. Then, making his own utterance clear as old Hecuba Smith, in her argumentation class at the University, had taught him to make it, he added: "You are so deeply dedicated to the principle of Scotch thrift that you won't permit yourself breath enough to articulate decently. You'll have to decide whether you prefer to hoard the resources of your brain or squander the resources of your diaphragm."

Effie, delighted with the sound of the unfamiliar words, began to laugh immoderately. Her plump body quivered gently at first and finally shook with a gathering storm of appreciative pleasure. Tears squeezed themselves out of the corners of her eyes. She had to drop her knife into the bowl and dive into her skirt for a handkerchief to wipe them away. Joe's body also shook with a kind of minor convulsion that did not express itself in sound. As though defiantly, he drew his lips still tighter together and only his large, clear eyes betrayed the fact that he was amused.

Mother Fraser was roused for the first time from her torpor. A roving, greedy glance darted from one to another of the group about her. The wrinkled, alert face became alive with malice. Gossip was the food on which she lived, and it was clear to David that she feared to have missed a promising morsel. She made guttural sounds of protest and demand.

"It's nothing," Effie said without trying to explain the interchange. "Cho-ie and Davie are always choking."

Effie had never got over her trick of letting the remainder of a Scotch burr turn all her j's into ch's. Many a time it had amused Dave. But this evening he found himself wondering, irrelevantly, what Miss Faith Winchester, at the Argus office, would think of this strange group of Scotch immigrants that made up his family. She'd think as little as possible of them. That was sure.

Joe had begun to mumble again. By watching his brother's lips closely, Dave was able to make out that he was being chal-

lenged about the effect on the poor of the recent charter amendment which in effect endorsed the policy of the Trust Company.

"You're a big man in the community," Joe urged with a kind of languid challenge. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Why, Joe?" Dave answered, "I've already written for the amendment and voted against it. I don't see what more can be expected of me."

Joe and Effie laughed again. But Dave, who often joined in genuine surprise at the unexpected aptness of his own rejoinders, sat silent. Joe's question and the answer rubbed at the raw surface of his mind where dissatisfaction with himself had been producing a sore. He had seen a look of horror in Faith Winchester's face the other night when he had told her that in Drummond it was necessary to choose between the desire to keep one's principles and the desire to keep one's job. He had wished afterward that he had not made the confession. And much more deeply he wished that what he had told her were not true.

Joe's lips were pursed as though their owner had heroically nerved himself to the effort of speech. But his loyalty, divided between love of expression and love of utter inertia, kept them moving soundlessly for a moment. Love of expression won after a brief struggle.

"I don't see why the Trust Company needs any help from the aldermen. It already owns everything in Drummond except this house. Effie has the deed to that, unless Senator Hawkins or one of his friends has been 'round lately to pick it up."

Effie rose with her potatoes and, giving Joe a reproachful slap on the shoulder, began tugging Mother Fraser out of her chair.

"Come on," she shouted. "It's time to get you ready for supper."

When they had gone Dave placed his chair close to his brother's. He wanted to ease that source of discontent which had been making him feel bruised and sick all these days, since he had talked to Faith Winchester. Joe would give him no sentimental assurances of his untainted virtue. But at least it would be a satisfaction to express his restlessness in words; to try to define this gnawing need.

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"Yes, sir," Joe said suddenly as though the conversation had not been interrupted at all. "You're more of a rascal than I am, Dave. It does no one any actual harm if I just sit on my tail. I don't go around debauching people as you do."

This was the good, familiar tone of their interchanges. It always began and ended with raillery. But in between there were moments of comfort.

"You know what men of my sainted profession say about themselves, Joe. Once a newspaper man, always a whore."

"You're not even a very reliable whore. You sometimes take a crack at the customers when they're in a very vulnerable position. Like your editorials against the Trust Company."

"That's just part of the game. No one in Drummond has a shred of conscience. When I write a ferocious, slashing and quite insincere attack on a man in public life, I often meet him the same day and get a hearty slap on the back. He knows that the attack is insincere. But he cherishes the implied tribute to his power. His fine manly cynicism helps to winnow out the chaff and he nourishes his egotism on what remains of flattery."

Joe made a clucking sound of reproach. "Don't ever urge me to go to work again. If that's the kind of sin industriousness leads to, I'm going to keep myself guiltless of it."

"Industry doesn't seem to be the strong point of the Frasers does it, Joe? But then, what can you expect of people brought up in the fine ancestral tradition of cattle thieves? If our aristocratic forebears had only managed to keep on with their raids out of the highlands, things would have been all right. But to degenerate into people with daily jobs to do was too much for the Frasers."

Joe smiled. "You can't say Pa didn't try to work. What did it get him? Nothing but a pile of inventions that no one wanted and an early heart attack. Sister Lizzie tried to work, after she saw Ma was no earthly good, and it killed her. You ought to let things like that be a warning to you."

A wave of revulsion went over David as he thought of the past. The image of Lizzie was clear before him: Lizzie struggling to keep an army of younger brothers from killing one another or drowning themselves in the river; Lizzie trying to shoulder all

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the responsibility her mother rejected; Lizzie dying, a failure. The family was scattered now. Rob was in Chicago wasting his gifts on pornographic art. John and Lizzie were dead. No one knew where Ed and Angus were. Joe was the happiest of them all. As he said work did not become the Frasers. The ones who tried it were the worst failures.

And yet, by God, he would rather be like Lizzie than like the others. An ordered and a decent life was what he wanted. He was tired of the casual girls from the chorus of the musical shows whom Ben Stanford threw in his way. He was tired of all the shabby compromises of his existence. He was ashamed of the fact that a girl like Faith Winchester could give him a rebuke which he knew that he deserved. He found suddenly that he wanted to talk to Joe about Faith Winchester.

"Have I told you about the girl we've hired down at the Argus?"

Joe shook his head.

"Curious sort of person to be a newspaper woman. There's a kind of Puritan primness about her that you'd think would make her shrivel up at the first contact with harsh reality. But I sent her out on that Murdoch plant story and she got mixed up in the riot and came back with the best story of the lot."

His brother was silent so long that David began to be embarrassed. "Pretty?" Joe asked, after a moment.

"No, I don't suppose you'd say so. She looks like a vestal virgin and carries herself with the kind of aloof dignity that you'd expect of a priestess. And she has principles! God, how she has principles! If anyone could reform me, she'd be the one."

"Is she as fine as Estelle Harvey?"

Dave turned on his brother with irritable resentment at such a comparison. But he put down his annoyance. Joe could not possibly understand how ridiculous he was, to ask such a question.

"Oh, she's Estelle's superior in every way: in talents, in sensibilities, in personal dignity . . . everything."

It seemed strange that he could ever have been anxious to marry Estelle. Faith Winchester made Estelle's pretensions to

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intellectuality seem absurdly shabby. Yet he had been miserable when Estelle refused to marry him. She had been attracted by his wit. They got on well together. But something in him had repelled her strongly. It might have been his slovenliness. She was always complaining of that. It had been powerful enough to make her prefer teaching school to marriage with him. It was strange the way things worked out. Now, he could be only glad that Estelle had chosen as she had.

"Are you going to marry her?" he suddenly heard Joe ask.

"Marry whom?"

"Why this Miss Winchester, of course. I don't have to ask if you're in love with her."

"Oh, no . . . no . . ."

Again he smiled at Joe's blunt and childish simplicity. It was absurd to think of his marrying Faith Winchester. And then, with the smile still on his lips, David felt the muscles of his face tighten. He saw, with a startling clarity, that Joe was right. His mind had refused to acknowledge the hope that his heart had been shaping so audaciously.

But it was still absurd to think of marrying Faith Winchester. What had he to offer? Not even money. He drove his fists deep into his pockets in angry recognition of their emptiness, the emptiness of his entire life. He had nothing to recommend him but the glittering, tarnished way of life that already she had repudiated.

"Oh, no," he heard himself say aloud once more.

He felt Joe's hand on his shoulder. "You're frightened. You're frightened because of Estelle. But not all women are as crazy as she was. Don't let yourself be frightened."

It was strange and touching to hear Joe saying those words to him once more. He was repeating a formula of their childhood. In the early May days when they had lived on the farm in Iowa, Dave, as the youngest boy, was always the one to be sent back to the house to ask Lizzie if they might go swimming. Rob and Ed and Angus and Joe would wait on the bank where they could see him when he returned. If his footsteps lagged, they knew that permission had been denied. But if he came running, they

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were out of their overalls and into the water long before he had reached them. Sometimes if the lake were very cold, they would actually be out again, leaping in the sun and laughing at his protests against having to go in alone. Rob and Ed and Angus would race up the hill returning his profane abuse with abuse still more profane. Only Joe stayed with him. "You poor little son-of-a-bitch," Joe would stay standing on the shore, "don't let yourself be frightened."

And here was Joe, still standing on the shore, still abusive, still protective, saying: "Don't let yourself be frightened."

The flood of assurance, which in the old days he had drawn from the sight of Joe lingering on the bank, rushed through him now. By God, it was still good advice. If he wanted to claim for himself the integrity—yes, the moral beauty—of Faith Winchester, it was a struggle worth putting some heart into. She wanted desperately to believe in him. That much had been clear on the day when they had talked, after her little party. She was a stranger and lonely. That prim, New England austerity of hers could not deceive anyone who looked at her closely. There was vitality in Faith Winchester. She wanted to thrust down roots into the life that she had begun to live here in Drummond. If he could nourish her belief in him . . . if he could show her that he was ready to cherish the same principles. . . .

And there was a way! The first time that the Trust Company used the new amendment to exercise tyrannical power, he could cut loose again. Give Senator Hawkins a good, authoritative kick on his broad and easily assailed backside. The Argus had let the bastards get away with dictation once. They would think that they had a free hand now to freeze onto every embarrassed business in Drummond, run it to their own advantage, pass out patronage to their friends. They would be more overbearing than ever. That would be his opportunity to show them that they did not exercise all authority between heaven and hell. He would slap them down for their first audacious act.

But Hawkins had told him to "ease up" on the Trust Company. And ease up meant just one thing in the Senator's indulgent idiom. It was synonymous with seeing, hearing and speaking

no evil of anything the little Neros might please to do. The Argus was expected to take orders dutifully because Senator Hawkins owned stock in it and because the editor was his personal friend.

Yes, a magnificent friend and patron who invited Dave Fraser to his big parties at The Cedars and made him Toastmaster at Commercial Club banquets. Dave was permitted to be the Court Fool who entertained stodgy men and helped them, for an evening, to forget their own unmitigated dullness. There was a time when he had deserved their patronizing contempt by considering the tribute of their laughter and applause sufficient recompense for all that they gave and all that they took away. The hell it was enough! When he weighed his life on the scales that a woman like Faith Winchester would use, he saw how little he had been permitted to have of dignity and decency.

But if they thought so little of him, there was a small surprise that he could spring on them. He'd write such a blistering editorial against the Trust Company that they'd have to take notice. He owed that much to himself and Drummond and . . . Faith Winchester.

At the thought of her, his defiant hopefulness seemed to shrivel. It was a curious way of wooing a girl: to think bravely about blistering the hide off the Trust Company. Like a primitive lover, he would go to her proudly carrying Senator Hawkins' head. He saw himself once more as an absurd figure. But with the perversity of the satirist, he refused to foreswear his resolution. He would blister the hide off the Trust Company anyway. It would do the boys a lot of good. Their hides were much too thick as it was.

Dave looked up to find Joe eyeing him, quizzically.

"Dreaming of the scent of orange blossoms?" his brother asked.

Dave laughed. "No, of a scent quite different. Senator Hawkins' blood."

Joe shook his head. "You'll never beat Senator Hawkins, Dave. He knows something you'll never learn: when to be righteous and when to be crafty. He's like the Scotch girl in the story who

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was walking out of a Sunday afternoon for a roll in the heather when Jock outraged all the decencies by starting to whistle for joy. Jeannie abruptly turned back and, when Jock protested, she answered. 'I wud'na fornicate wi' a man wha' wud whistle on the Sabbath Day.'"

"Yes, that describes the Senator's sense of the proprieties," Dave agreed. "But it's an old story, Joe. Went the rounds of the Argus six months ago."

Then as he sat, moodily considering the difficulty of matching Senator Hawkins in virtue, a small, verbal ingenuity occurred to him.

"You know," he said aloud, "that mossy one of yours has thrown a great light on those beautiful lines of Tennyson:

"The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story."

Joe shook with silent laughter. With the shrewd preoccupation of the artist, Dave began considering how he could fasten his quip on some old bore at a Commercial Club banquet. It was sure to get a laugh if he directed it at the snowy summit of Senator Hawkins' head.

He was still polishing the phrasing when Effie came to call them in to supper.

IV

(December, 1890)

THE court-room was crowded. As Faith tried to enter, three men lounging in the doorway offered a barrier of indolently-relaxed arms and legs. In the crisp voice which she had learned to use on her newspaper assignments, Faith said: "Will you pardon me, please?" They continued to ignore her, and she repeated her request in a louder and more authoritative tone. At last, with an air of resentful surprise, the loiterers drew back a little. She felt their audacious, speculative glances upon her as she crossed the threshold.

Well, let them think it unwomanly of her to come to the trial, she reflected defiantly. She had as good a right to watch this drama as any spectator present. A better right than most of them . . . far better. This was Mr. Fraser's own battle and he had let her have a little share in it. There would have been no suit for libel against the Drummond Argus if Mr. Fraser had not had the courage to attack the Trust Company. It was a secret which Faith had shared with no one that she had known of Mr. Fraser's campaign even before it began. He had come into her little office one night and showed her the editorial in which he had made his first attack. They had gone over it together. Mr. Fraser had even accepted some suggestions about the wording. Yes, this was her fight as well. It amused her to realize how impossible it would be to persuade the men who admitted her so grudgingly that she was actually Mr. Fraser's confidante. The irony of her being considered an intruder made her small, secret collaboration with him something to be hugged close.

Faith pressed herself against the rear wall of the court-room and tried to adjust her senses to the unfamiliar scene. The place had an unaired smell which was even more oppressive than the actual nearness of so many unknown men. It reeked of tobacco

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almost as sickeningly as the City Room at the Argus. Faith understood why when the man at her left leaned nonchalantly passed her and, with indifferent aim, sent a jet of tobacco juice toward the brass cuspidor, several feet away. No one in the room either sat or stood erect. The judge himself was slumped forward with a look of somnolent slyness. A wing of the City Hall stretched past the windows of this room across a narrow courtyard, shutting off the rays of the late sun. Unshaded gas lights blazed along the wall and overhead. In this almost ferocious visibility, the look of disheveled maleness that justice wore was unsparingly revealed. Pressed close by untidy neighbors, obliged to peer over their shoulders and under their arms to catch a glimpse of the scene, Faith was shocked to realize how much in need of modification were all her traditional ideas of the rigid decorum of the law. She began to understand why her intrusion should have caused so much surprise to the loiterers at the door.

Perhaps she should not have come, after all. It would have been more fitting to have let Mr. Fraser give her an account of the afternoon as he had of all the sessions before. There was her own assignment to be considered, too. She would have time for nothing but a bowl of soup at the Epworth League club-room if she were to keep her appointment. Mrs. Sheldon was going to show her the decorations for the Old Settlers' Ball at the Armory. Mrs. Sheldon was to give her also a description of the gown to be worn by each of the twenty descendants of old settlers in the reception line.

She felt a moment's bitter humiliation at the thought that her work, her career, should be made up of such trivial affairs. The greater part of her time and energy was spent in placating women who could be astonishingly petty if every detail about their regalia of black lace and diamonds, boas and fans, were not reported with obsequious and tender reverence. But with a firm clenching of her hands, Faith checked this protest. It was her work for which she received a salary as large as Mr. Fraser had dared to make it. Fifteen dollars a week was a fabulous amount for a woman to be paid. She knew that and she was grateful. It was not to be expected that a story like that of the riot at the

Murdoch plant would come to her every day. She must be patient with the overbearing old settlers and be ready for her next opportunity.

Now that she had actually seen the place where Mr. Fraser's drama was being enacted she must go. The next time he talked to her about the trial, she would be able to fit his image into the scene and see the whole thing more vividly. But she would not go before she had seen Mr. Fraser himself. That much satisfaction she must have.

Her eye sought him in the group at the front of the room. There he was, slumped down along the bench seeming to indulge in the delusion that the shoulder blades were the parts intended by a beneficent nature to be sat upon. Faith was conscious of a moment's sharp disappointment. He looked like the others. Far too indolently and gracelessly like the others! If it were John who had come here to lend his wit and his gift of scorn to the defense of the defenseless, he would have known how to play his rôle with a proper dignity and reserve. Then, with a sudden throb of guilt, she realized her unfairness. What did she really know of John's gift for scorn or whether he actually possessed any of the sacrificial ardor with which she was attempting to endow him? When she compared Mr. Fraser and John to Mr. Fraser's disadvantage, she was trying willfully to measure one man's gallantry in terms of another's manners. It was absurd.

Faith's gloved hand caught at her throat, pressing hard as though to stifle this unwelcome breath of memory. Was she never to escape from it? Must she always think of John as so preëminently the best of all possible men! She could not be just in her estimation of anyone else. Mr. Fraser had done a thing of which she had no reason to believe that John would be capable. Livelihood, position in Drummond, friendship with the powerful: everything had been risked in writing those editorials in the Argus. Mr. Fraser had offered himself disinterestedly as the leader of all the scattered and inarticulate elements of protest in Drummond. He had lent, to protest, his own subtle, humorous and eloquent voice. He could gain nothing, and he might lose much. Surely that was closer to excellence than anything she

had ever known, closer in its brave, haphazard generosity than all the polite and rigid virtues of Mr. Haddon or of John himself. It was stupid and ungrateful to have so little regard for the friendship that Mr. Fraser had given her and cherish in its place the meager and childish memory of John.

Then, the tension of her attitude relaxed and she smiled. How my tender little conscience harangues me, she thought; and how it loves its own delicate perceptions. Dear conscience! kindly tie up your compunctions with a pink satin ribbon and lay them away in a rose-scented box. I think Mr. Fraser is the finest man I've ever known. I'm here because I admire and respect him. If you have any more sufferings to invent for me, please reserve them for tomorrow. I'm much too busy to be concerned with them today.

Enjoying the comfort of this secret defiance, Faith turned again toward the witness stand. A man in a gray-green suit stood near the plump, middle-aged man whom he was cross-examining. There seemed to be many undulations in the lawyer's lean length as he bent over the witness. He uncoiled, stood erect a moment and then bent again. That must be Mr. Islington, Faith decided. Mr. Fraser had said that the attorney for the Trust Company possessed "all the caressing persistence of a boa-constrictor" as he deftly entangled a witness. With the almost cooing suavety which Mr. Fraser had also described, Mr. Islington continued the cross-examination.

"Please answer the question directly, Mr. Olson," he was saying. "Were you or were you not one of the rioters at the Murdoch plant?"

The man on the stand sat silent for a moment, looking as sullen and baffled as a child that has been baited to the point of nervous crisis.

"I work at the Murdoch plant. I was around the day of the trouble."

"I see!" Mr. Islington was able to make the words tingle with incredulous surprise. They contained the hint that Mr. Islington suffered an acute personal shock at the discovery of Mr. Olson's treachery to his employers. Then turning suddenly upon Mr.

Olson, he shot out the question: "When did you last discuss the situation at the Murdoch plant with Mr. Fraser?"

The witness lifted his eyes for the first time to Mr. Islington's face eyeing him with blank bewilderment.

"I ain't never discussed it with him," he protested.

"Do you mean to say that you didn't ask him to present the scene of the riot sympathetically in the pages of the Argus?"

"I don't even know Mr. Fraser."

Mr. Islington permitted an indulgent, but unbelieving, smile to spread slowly over his face. "Do you mean to tell this court that you don't know Dave Fraser?"

"Well," Mr. Olson hesitated, "I know Dave Fraser the way everyone in Drummond knows him."

"Then surely if you know him well enough to call him by a soubriquet, it isn't too much to suppose that you asked him to present the story of the outrageous attack on property at the Murdoch plant in a way that would be favorable to the men who made the attack."

"I never discussed nothing with Mr. Fraser because I don't know him to talk to. I just know him from seeing him around."

"I see. I think that's all."

With elaborate, ironic courtesy, Mr. Islington stepped back to permit the witness to leave the stand. Shaking his head with the confusion of a man who has suddenly been required to join in a forgotten game of childhood, Mr. Olson returned to a seat near where Faith had discovered Mr. Fraser. In the very center of the court-room, Mr. Islington continued dramatically to claim attention for himself and for his insinuating smile. His very silence added eloquently to all the hints of collusion that he had tried to drop into his cross-examination of the uncomprehending witness.

A wave of furious resentment went over Faith. It was as David Fraser had said: Mr. Islington was using all these childish tricks to make the Argus shift roles with the Trust Company. During all these days of the trial he had been trying, just as he had tried with Mr. Olson, to make it appear that the Argus, not the Trust Company, was in league with those who wished to cripple small

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businesses and exercise a tyrannical overlordship. He was deliberately trying to confuse the issue of this suit by playing upon the prejudices of the timorous and the slavish.

Faith tugged at the watch pinned to her starched blouse. It was difficult to bring into view under the edge of her tight-fitting coat. If she ever owned a watch of her own, Faith decided, it would be of the kind that she could hang on a cord around her neck. This one belonged to Kathie. But since Kathie kept or broke her few appointments entirely according to whim, she had agreed to rent her watch to Faith. It cost a large part of her lunch money to have it. But it was worth it, not to be late for appointments.

Five-thirty! She must go now or Mrs. Sheldon would be kept waiting. Mrs. Sheldon might even be irritated enough not to wait. Faith would have all the old settlers as enemies if descriptions of their splendor did not appear in the morning paper. No, she mustn't permit herself to linger a moment longer.

She edged patiently back toward the door. The crowd on the threshold of the court-room had grown thicker since she had come in and it was almost impossible to thread her way. As she tried to weave back and forth between the arms that pressed against her on both sides, she became aware that a new murmur of excitement was being carried back from spectator to spectator.

"They're calling Dave Fraser to the stand," she heard the man beside her say.

A moment more! Surely she might stay long enough just to see him enacting the central rôle in the drama he had planned.

She allowed herself to be held by the crowd, edging about just enough so that she could see Mr. Fraser. He stood, for a moment, stooping over to listen to little Mr. Day who was defending the Argus. Then he straightened up and with his loose, careless stride crossed to the witness stand. As he took the oath, he smiled with casual geniality. It was almost as though he faced, not a court-room, but a table of banqueters whose attention he was amiably picking up one by one, fixing it deftly, with the skill of the expert, upon himself.

Yes, Faith thought guiltily, if I must have dignity in a man,

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what could be better than this? They are all under the control of the reins he holds. He can let them run with his wit and drive them with his will. It's beautiful to see.

When he had been put under oath, Mr. Fraser seated himself with the air of utter relaxation that overtook him after a moment in any new situation. He answered Mr. Day's questions with an off-hand courtesy that served to emphasize the point that they were designed to establish. Mr. Day skilfully acquainted the court-room with the facts that David Fraser was sprung of working class people; that he had supported himself at manual labor while attending the University; that his private friendships with many members of the Trust Company had been long and intimate. Having presented him as a man whose affiliations with both groups in the controversy were close and whose judgment might therefore be considered impartial, Mr. Day relinquished the witness to the attorney for the Trust Company.

Faith saw Mr. Islington rise, betraying evident perplexity and irritation. He had not expected to have the witness so soon. He moved forward in a concentration so deep that it permitted him no opportunity to display his usual suave confidence.

"Mr. Fraser," he began at last, "What are your relations with the Argus?"

He fixed his eyes accusingly on the witness, seeming ready to spring, to coil, to entwine himself round and round and round.

A pause followed the question. While it continued Faith could hear the loud beat of her own hopeful, doubting heart. It seemed to leap higher with every throb, till it filled her throat. She swallowed hard as though to force it back into place.

Then David Fraser smiled with an air of boyish candor.

"Friendly, I hope."

It took a moment for the crowd to appreciate how neatly this pointed refusal to be patronized had exploded Mr. Islington's pomposity. Then a huge roar of laughter raced through the court-room. Its vociferous maleness seemed to pass directly over Faith's head as she stood among the men in the doorway. She felt as though she were standing under a bridge with a locomotive roaring above her. She was vicariously shaken by the power of their

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response, as arms and shoulders moved rhythmically against her own.

The sound of laughter had never been so good to hear. Faith clasped her arms across her body, hands gripping elbows, as though to gather up all this approval for Mr. Fraser and hold it ecstatically within herself. This was the testimony to his triumph for which she had longed. Mr. Fraser had accomplished all that he intended. These men were with him. Their attention had been fixed on the Trust Company and its habit of pious thieving. The editorials in the *Argus* had forced an open acknowledgment of the issue between the Trust Company and the public. These men were the public. They were here in this court-room because Mr. Fraser had wakened them out of inertia and indifference to their own good. Their response to his evasive and mocking answer showed how delighted they were to see the Trust Company discomfited. He had been able to do what he wanted to do and she was glad for him . . . more glad than she had been since . . . since she had left Meadville.

While the judge called for order and the laughter died slowly away, Faith slipped from the court-room and down the wide stairway of the musty City Hall. Out on the street, she drew a deep breath into her lungs. The night wind struck through her thin coat. But she drew back her shoulders, relishing the cold, feeling ready to meet any trifling difficulty with Mrs. Sheldon, now that she had seen Mr. Fraser's triumph.

She thought of him again with deepening pleasure. He was so wholly, so completely, an individual. The very carelessness of dress and manner belonged to the uncalculated candor of his temperament. It was like him, at the moment of his triumph, to avoid airs of heroism or martyrdom, to slip once more into the rôle of the clown. It really strengthened Mr. Fraser's position to evade a clash with Mr. Islington, for it left the Trust Company looking impotent and foolish in the midst of its tyrannical pomposity.

Yes, he was an excellent soul. Papa would agree to that, she felt sure. It was fine to be associated with him. Mr. Fraser would be dedicated always to the good life. It pleased her even to re-

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member that she had seen him waver and then once more take firm hold upon resolution. That was the way that the excellent soul must always move, not with a blind and stupid confidence, but knowing the dangers, fearing them a little, and yet conquering them stubbornly. He was a fine man . . . a man whom you could admire and respect wholeheartedly.

She felt tears of excitement in the corners of her eyes and brushed them impatiently away. The City Hall clock began booming. Six o'clock. She had loitered too long. Mrs. Sheldon would be kept waiting. It was *lèse majesté*. No, no, she needn't be late. Not if she didn't stop for supper at all. She could get there in time. She hated the soup at the Epworth League club-room anyway. Kathie thought it was wonderful. She and Mamma became quite rhapsodic when they discussed how splendid it was that you could get a fine, nourishing bowl of soup like that for five cents. It was really all one needed for a meal. That might possibly be because they so seldom had to make a meal of it.

Oh well, it didn't matter. Nothing mattered but Mr. Fraser's success. She saw a horse-car at the end of the street and ran after it, feeling quite gay.

V

(December, 1890)

FAITH sat once more on the horse-car, returning to the Argus office. The experience with Mrs. Sheldon had been less distasteful than she had expected it to be. It was even a little exciting to see the setting in which the Old Settlers would receive the four hundred guests who were to dance in a bower of evergreens and holly. You could not very well call the Armory a cozy bower. But its bare immensity had been dwarfed to comfortable proportions by the decorations of which Mrs. Sheldon was so proud. The steel skeleton of the building had been decently covered with gay crêpe paper which blended in well with the whole design. The silver punch-bowl was the largest of all imaginable punch-bowls; the grand patriarch among loving cups. It would be possible to make the whole thing sound quite successfully magnificent and exclusive, if she could only recapture the bustling eagerness with which Mrs. Sheldon had momentarily infected her while they made the rounds of the Armory together.

It was a little ironic to realize that the Argus, which was at war with the very people who would make up the list of guests at the Old Settlers' Ball, would, in its morning issue, do homage to their private splendor. But it was necessary to keep two interests distinct, Faith reflected. She began to try to think of a piquant lead for her story. There was a kind of ironic fun to be had out of capturing, in words, the solemn and portentous seriousness which Mrs. Sheldon took in her childish snobbery. She had no awareness at all of the fact that the original old settlers of Drummond would certainly howl with derision at what their portentous descendants had become.

Her notes were shaken violently in her hands. She realized that the horse-car was going unusually fast. It started to take the bend of the street that led toward the Argus office. The careening

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movement made Faith feel sick. She stood up planning to get out as soon as possible and walk the rest of the way.

Then suddenly she was aware of a crash, and a fall Yes, the fall must have been that of her own body. She came to herself, in bewilderment, stretched at full length of the car floor, her face near the dirty boards. A pain shot along her spine. She tried to rise and groaned aloud.

A man stood over her. "Let me help you up," he said.

At the touch of his hands on her shoulders she became conscious of the indignity of her position. People stood staring down at her. Her skirt was pulled up above her knees showing the black petticoat, made from an old party dress of Mamma's. Her hat had fallen off and her hair was about her face. She shut her eyes, trying to restore the sense of a decent privacy in which she could pull herself together.

"Oh don't, please," she said aloud. "I can manage by myself."

Reaching out blindly, she tugged her skirt into place and groped for her hat. When she opened her eyes again, she saw that the man who had tried to help her get up had drawn back, looking solicitous, curious and abashed. He rolled a cigar about nervously in his mouth.

"Here," he said, indicating the seat where Faith had sat. "The fool driver hit a lamp post coming round the corner. We all got kicked around. Guess you was the only one knocked unconscious."

Faith pulled herself back to the seat, panting with the effort. She ached with an enveloping, nauseating completeness that did not define itself as any particular kind of hurt. But when she raised her arms to put on her hat the pain that she had felt on the floor shot again along her spine.

A buzz of conversation broke out all about her. Now that she had reduced herself to the level of the other passengers by returning to consciousness, her condition was no more interesting to them than their own.

"I saw what was going to happen. I yelled out. But it was too late."

"The damn driver was going too fast."

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"Yah. Trying to make up time. Car was late. I waited ten minutes at my corner."

They had resolved themselves, Faith saw, into the close alliance that always springs up among those who share an accident. With a happy, childish vehemence they exchanged recollections, nourished one another's resentment against the driver. Each little souvenir of the moment before seemed as dear as a memory that had been cherished through twenty years. This instant was timeless. Its immediacy was already viewed by those about her as though along a vista of years, and, when those years had actually been covered, the story would still be bright and new. She wished that she, too, could reach out and grasp their wholesome excitement. But for her, she knew, the moment would be eternal as one of helpless humiliation. She would see only staring, curious eyes and the image of a man rolling a cigar nervously about in his mouth.

Presently the driver, looking harassed and irritable, forced his way through the group that had gathered around Faith.

"Would you give me your name and address, Miss?" he said.

Faith looked up, startled. "What for?"

"It's the report I got to make to the company."

She took the pencil from him and wrote with a laborious conscientiousness, as though writing were a new and frightening occupation. The long, spidery characters took shape slowly while she held her right hand firmly in the grip of the left to keep it from trembling. Then, feeling as though she had committed herself to some obligation by giving this information, she rose and slipped almost guiltily from the car. She had work to do, and it could not be kept waiting any longer.

The car had stopped only two blocks from the Argus office, Faith was relieved to discover. But she had gone only a few steps when the pain began again. It raced along her spine and then, like flame from a burning building, burst all about her head. She felt as though she must be trailing behind her a visible plume of pain.

But as she strode down the badly lighted street, angrily defying her discomfort, weakness at last overcame her resolution. She

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began to cry. It was really too much to ask. Much to much! She was tired and hungry and cold and hurt. And no one in the entire world cared whether or not she dropped here in the street from exhaustion and hunger and pain. She would simply be an object of curiosity and what was worse, when she was carried back to Poe Simpson's house, an object of annoyance. She was not supposed to be sick in that house. That was Mamma's privilege which she shared with Kathie. Faith was the willing sacrifice to all of them. She was only asked to endure and endure and endure and endure. . . .

Suddenly she stopped short in the street. Somehow she must check this mental plunge into the depth of self-pity.

No, I won't have it, she thought. I won't feel sorry for myself. At least I'm entitled to my private dignity. All right! say my destiny is hard. I can dominate my destiny. I can refuse to be dismayed. I can work. Out of a bad life I can create a good one. I can do it all by myself, without the help of anyone. I can dominate myself and make my own good life. I can and I will.

Resolution seemed to flow through her once more. Forgetting everything else in this exultant sense of control, she hurried up the street, climbed the stairs to the Argus office, lighted the gas in her own room and went to work on her story.

The description of the Armory, dressed up for the celebration, was easy enough to do. But she had to force her weary brain to deal with all the traditional fatuities about the costumes worn by each of the hostesses. Faith worked over her notes dutifully for an hour, distilling into each paragraph a new essence of wonder or delight at the beauty of brocade, pan-velvet and satin. She smiled as she glanced back over all this verbal fervor. Extracting excitement out of her own indifference was a greater miracle than squeezing blood from a turnip. Thank heaven, she was through harvesting this crop of turnips.

When she had turned in her story at the City Desk and was putting on her hat to go home, it occurred to her that she had participated in another incident of the evening's news. As a good newspaper woman, it was her duty to write a story covering the accident of which no one else was likely even to be aware. At the

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thought of having once more to exercise her mind,—to hold it to the close, orderly, brisk examination of fact when it longed to surrender luxuriously to exhaustion—seemed like an intolerable imposition. But automatically Faith pulled paper and pencil once more toward her.

She stood at last with the second story in her hands, ready to turn out the light in her office, when the door opened and Mr. Fraser came in. He smiled with the boyish diffidence of a man who approaches a woman to ask for praise.

It was clear what he wanted of her. There was nothing that she herself wanted more than to see his smile deepen into confidence as she told him how she admired what he had done. But she couldn't speak to him now except to say: "Please leave me alone. Let me sleep! Let me die!" She gripped her hands over the edge of the desk and waited for him to speak.

"I thought you might want to hear the rest of the story about the trial," he began apologetically.

A curious new pain had begun to torment her. It slipped up the back of her neck, shot into her head and then burst into a shower like fireworks, scattering sparks all through her brain. She waited desperately for this preoccupying phenomenon to end, feeling that she would scream when it reached its climax. Instead, she heard herself saying with an air of absorbed eagerness:

"I was there for a moment today. It was a great triumph."

"You were there? When?"

"Just as you went on the stand. I heard you snub Mr. Islington and I heard the people laugh. It was almost like a cheer, wasn't it? It meant they wanted you to win."

The fireworks were coming faster and faster. A kind of reckless extravagance had entered into the sensation. She narrowed her eyes in an effort to keep the image of Mr. Fraser clearly focussed before her. It made her feel sly to be looking at him like that. Sly . . . that was it! She must be sly to keep him from knowing that she was hardly paying any attention to him at all but only to the strange circus going on in her head.

"I'm glad you were there," Mr. Fraser continued. "I'm glad you were there at just that moment, because the whole thing

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would never have happened if it had not been for you. I'd have let the whole responsibility slip from me if it hadn't been that I knew you'd think badly of me for evading the issue. I wanted you to know that if we are to have a triumph, it's really yours."

She heard the words, and they gave her pleasure. It was like music heard a long way off, very pleasant even if you couldn't quite make out the tune. The triumph was really hers. Yes, that was the kind of thing she would tell herself. But it wasn't she who was saying it. No, it was Mr. Fraser. Mr. Fraser was saying that she had helped him! She had been useful! Oh, that made all the effort endurable. She could dominate her destiny. Together, she and Mr. Fraser could make a good life. . . . Together.

She moved toward him, not sure quite what her intention was. But the fireworks, which she had forgotten for a moment, started again and she closed her eyes to wait for them to stop.

"Miss Winchester," she heard Mr. Fraser saying. "What is it? You're ill."

She opened her eyes. "No, no, it's nothing. I'm just tired."

It wasn't fair, she told herself, to let him feel that she hadn't appreciated the fine moment when he held the whole court-room in his hand. She should not let her exhaustion and her nerves distract from his happiness. No, she would not let him go away disappointed.

"You haven't let me tell you how splendid I thought you were. It was like a play and you were the center of it, controlling the whole thing, making it go as you wanted it to go. It was beautiful."

He cut her off almost brusquely. "That doesn't matter now. I'm going to get a cab and take you home."

"You mustn't do that." Her voice sounded hysterical and strident.

"Why in the world not! I certainly shall."

"I can't let you. It's important that I shouldn't. Do you remember when I first came to ask for work, I promised that I would always come back with a story and that I should never ask for special consideration as a woman? I have to live up to that. I'm going to live up to it."

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She saw that he was almost impatient. "At least let me get a cab for you."

"No," she protested again, but felt her resolution slipping from her.

"Oh yes; that much I insist upon. What is this?" he asked taking her story from her hands. "I'll turn it in and meet you at the head of the stairs."

When he had left her, the mood of slyness returned. If she could only slip down the stairs while he was in the City Room, she could probably escape. She must not take him away from his work. She must prove that she was self-sufficient. In spite of Mr. Fraser's protests she would go home alone. The horse-cars ran infrequently at this hour. But she could walk across the bridge. That would get her home almost as soon as the car anyway.

Faith went out into the corridor. She could see the head of the stairs. No one was near them. Gathering her skirts high about her ankles, she ran down the hall, down the stairs. Her breath was coming fast as she pulled open the outer door. She heard Mr. Fraser's voice calling: "Miss Winchester, where are you? Miss Winchester, come back here." But she pulled the door shut behind her and hurried down the street.

The way to the bridge led through Drummond's shabbiest district. The whole of Bridge Square was given up to saloons, shabby rooming houses, and down-at-heel hotels where dishevelled men loitered in the windows sucking endlessly at toothpicks. The only variation on the theme of charmless relaxation, represented by the cheap saloons and hotels, was offered by the even cheaper clothing stores. Second-hand garments hung, during the hours when the proprietors were doing business, out over the pavements so that an unwary passer-by might be struck by a languid, empty sleeve if he did not follow a carefully charted course, in passing.

The poverty of the scene matched the squalor. Faith had sometimes driven through it with Poe Simpson who liked this route because it offered a short-cut from his house to the center of town. But she had never been on these streets on foot, even in the daytime. As she passed one after another of the dimly-

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lighted, carefully shaded windows, Faith felt in her pocket for the whistle. She touched the cold silver of its two little pipes. Mr. Fraser had given it to her to be used in any emergency when she was on a night assignment. It comforted her to remember that it was a real police whistle, the tone of which would be recognized by anyone on the force who happened to be within call.

Of course, it would not be necessary to use it. Faith had frequently reminded herself of her own conviction that to be "annoyed" in public a woman must first give some indication that she did not take too severe an attitude toward the possibility of being annoyed. If you looked quite completely severe and forbidding, if you walked with your eyes fixed grimly on distance and saw nothing, you were almost certain to be left alone. Repeating this philosophy once more, she stepped out onto the lonely, empty stretch of the bridge.

Much more imminent than any danger of insult was the danger of not being able to hold up her own head. With night above her and the tumbling water of the river below, Faith felt as though she were sinking through space, sick with a vertigo which came not in flashes, but was steady, oppressive, breath-taking persistence.

Half-way across the bridge, she became aware that there were footsteps behind her. She tried to believe that she had imagined them. But the click of heels became more unmistakably clear with every step. They might, of course, belong to someone who meant to pass. Faith slackened her own pace; the footsteps behind her adjusted their rhythm. She ran for a few feet and heard the beat quicken behind her.

It was certain that she was being followed. She should have foreseen that here on the bridge she would be utterly unprotected. If she were to blow her whistle the sound would not reach to either side. The thought of her helplessness filled her with panic. Since there was nothing to be done that could really defend her, she followed the wild demand of her fear and put the whistle to her lips.

A dismal little sound issued from it. Faith, even in the midst of her panic, realized that this was no threat, no defiance. It was more like a plea, a bleating womanish, ridiculous plea.

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She started to run again. But the pain in her back and in her head swirled into another maddening crescendo. She felt herself stumbling dizzily over the rough boards of the bridge, tumbling against the railing. . . .

. . . Someone was lifting her up. It was Mr. Fraser.

"You poor child," he was saying, "you poor, strange child. . . . I couldn't let you go home alone. I had to follow you. Don't you know that you're ill?"

She let herself slip back into his arms. Here, she must rest. Yes, rest. . . .

VI

(December, 1890)

BEN STANFORD had driven with Dave across the river to call on Faith Winchester. But now that they were at the door, he refused to go inside.

"I don't like that damn family of hers," Ben explained. "Every time I give her tickets for the theater, somebody else pops up in the seats. Never Miss Winchester herself. How long you expect to be? I'll drive around and wait."

"Don't do that," Dave urged. "I can't tell how long I may be. They're a very chatty family. Even Poe Simpson."

"Look here, my man. I'm going to wait and drive you back to town. I'm going to take you to dinner and save you up for the game tonight. You've missed the poker session three times in a row. And that's got to stop."

"I didn't expect to play tonight either, Ben."

"Listen, you dim-wit, you can't do that to us. It's no goddamn fun unless you're there. What you afraid of? Losing money? I'll underwrite your losses if you'll just sit in like you always have. What the be-Jesus has got into you? You're never acted like this before!"

Ben was becoming uncomfortably curious, Dave thought. It was impossible to tell this man, with whom he had been drunk and disorderly God knew how many times, that he was in love; seriously in love and hoping to marry. Ever since the night, two weeks ago, when he had found Faith on the bridge, he had felt proud and purposeful in his relationship with her. That was something new for Dave Fraser: to feel that he had anything so definite as an objective. He liked it. In fact, he liked it a hell of a lot. The mood had begun that night when she lay in his arms, so light, so confiding, so innocently abandoned to exhaustion. Dave had felt toward her a tenderness in which exultation blended with

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anxiety. The measure of her need was also the measure of his strength. It was as though the two had been called simultaneously into being; the feminine and masculine attitudes appropriately matched and mated.

He had seen her many times during the two weeks of her being confined to bed, and familiarity with her family had tended to throw down what he had thought might be a barrier between them. He shared Ben Stanford's opinion that Faith Winchester's mother and sister were parasites: parasites of very superior lineage, no doubt; parasites with a talent for assuming highly moral attitudes, but parasites nonetheless. Dave's own desire to care for Faith unselfishly went far in his mind to justify his pretensions when he discovered that there was no one else who was concerned with her welfare at all.

Ben gathered up the reins. "I'll give you three-quarters of an hour. That should be time enough to give her her pay envelop and the news and my love. You report back here promptly if you don't want your friends to chip in to get you an honorary membership in the Little Rollo Reform and Uplift Society."

"All right, I'll play tonight, Ben. But with my own money. I earn it every bit as corruptly as you earn yours. It has as much right to finish an advance course in tainting by being lost at poker."

But as he walked toward the door of Poe Simpson's house he could not help being a little angry at Ben. There was always this pressure on him, forcing him to waste his time and money. Other men were allowed to be ambitious. Well-directed energy was admired in them. Yet when Dave Fraser tried to withdraw from the endless round of indulgences, Ben and his friends acted as though it were some sort of betrayal of their right to his society. The moral world had been turned topsy-turvy about his ears. He was expected forever to stand on his head and if once in a month he attempted to stand like other men, on his feet, heads were shaken over him as though he were guilty of some grotesque perversity.

Of all the men he had ever known, Stanford was his best and most faithful friend. Dinners, cigars, fancy cravats and cuff-links,

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Ben would give without ever expecting a return. He even regarded any effort to square the social account as a lack of appreciation. Yet, Dave could not tell this intimate friend, who was a man of influence in the theater, that those evenings, stolen from the poker group, had been spent in writing a play. Ben had often said that there wasn't a writer of comedy in the country who could touch Dave's stuff for spontaneity and ingenuity. If that were true, Ben should be glad to further an honest effort to capitalize on the gift. But the truth was that if Ben knew about the play, he would have no encouragement to offer. He would sit staring at the floor, turning his big diamond ring around and around on his finger, citing all the disappointments of other men, magnifying all the difficulties to the point where they obliterated hope. Ben wanted to buy companionship at a reasonable price. From a deep cynicism sprang his unwillingness to help a friend in any real way.

He would write the play despite Ben. Yes, and he would get it produced, too. There were plenty of actors who would be interested to see it, men whom he had come to know in the days when he did dramatic criticism simply because he enjoyed doing it. Sol Smith Russell would read it and advise him. By God, he'd write the damn thing if only to show Ben, and the whole collection of thugs who were his friends, that he was capable to do something beside make a horse's-ass of himself at stag dinners.

Then, the soft voice of humor corrected this vehement defiance. He would write the play for a better reason. He would write it as part of his strange wooing of Faith Winchester. He had already presented her with a libel suit, as another man might present a bouquet of violets and tea roses. Dave saw himself, as a cartoonist might, making the most fantastic of all possible gestures of gallantry. But Faith Winchester had liked it. That was all that mattered. She might very well be pleased. He would never have had the hardihood to carry through the campaign without her. Baiting and snarling weren't pleasant occupations even when they were indulged in for a noble cause. Senator Hawkins' howls and threats out of Washington hadn't added to the serenity of the past month. But it was over now. And a

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whopping success for the Argus, too. There was such a thing as the power of public opinion. The boys in the Trust Company were still rubbing their eyes with amazement over the discovery. It was interesting to note with what docility even a bullying bastard like Senator Hawkins lay down and rolled over when it came actually to a show down. Dave climbed the steps of Poe Simpson's house feeling once more the lift of his success.

Mrs. Winchester opened the door to him. "Mr. Fraser," she said with her habitual air of being surprised almost beyond words at any attention from a gentleman, "how kind and faithful you are."

A first glimpse of Mrs. Winchester always made Dave feel ashamed of his suspicions about her. In her modest black dress, with the amethyst pin at her neck, she looked exactly like all the middle-aged *grandes-dames* he had ever seen on the stage. Her voice was, like a daughter's, low and exquisitely modulated. He had never heard her say anything that was not carefully worded to express a kind of demure and womanly reticence. Yet Dave somehow found himself hating her elaborate pretense to a special kind of gentility. It seemed to have no basis in good-will. Faith's nervous collapse, after the street car accident, had certainly stirred no sympathy in her own family. Mrs. Winchester seemed to be concerned only with the fear that Faith might lose her job if she did not go back to work quickly.

The whole family imposed upon her. Something that Kathie had said made Dave think that they were all particularly worried about the little soubrette's trousseau for which Faith, obviously, was expected to pay. The younger sister was as aggressive as a member of a pony ballet in burlesque. That young fool, Lovatt Fleming, was infatuated with her in the drooling manner that belonged to his imbecile type. Now that he had been dropped from the University, the marriage was being hurried forward. Dave felt something like personal jealousy every time that he saw Kathie in one of her theatrically chic costumes. In all the months that Faith Winchester had worked at the Argus, Dave had never seen her in anything but that one neatly pressed skirt, a prim

and severe shirt waist, a threadbare coat and a hat from which many of the feathers had been blown away in the winter weather.

There was something that hinted discreetly at connivance in Mrs. Winchester as she stood with him in the hall. "I suppose you'll want to go right up and see how our little girl is getting on," she said. "I'd like to tempt you with a cup of tea but I mustn't keep you."

It was clear that he had an ally in Mrs. Winchester. But as he followed her up the steps, Dave was aware of the fact that he would much rather be allowed to make his way alone. Too many things had been put over on Faith Winchester. He had no desire that marriage to him should be added to the list. This must be her own choice, if she made it at all.

Faith's eyes gave him a warm greeting as he entered the room. He saw again that she was distressed, as she had been on every other visit, to have to receive him in bed. He acknowledged her prim modesty by taking her hand across a distance as great as his long arm could span.

Mrs. Winchester fluttered about the room drawing the curtains against the fading light and putting a match to the candles on the table. She was deliberately trying to make the setting as confidential as possible. Dave almost laughed aloud. It was idiotic to act as though he needed to be coaxed and cosseted into a proposal. What he longed for was simply an assurance from Faith herself. Would it please her, he wondered, to know that in his secret mind, he had been thinking of nothing but her? No idea, no impression, no hope penetrated there unless it carried the image of Faith Winchester as its authority.

Faith! his spirit cried deep within him, you are the center toward which all the scattered and corrupted parts of me long to be drawn and made whole. I long for your youth to make me freshly alive. I long for your earnestness to remind me of the ideals I once held high. I long for your purity to wipe away the recollection of much shabby living. I bring you my need and my hopes and my will in want of mending. Take them, if you can.

The declaration pressed so hard against his forehead that he felt as though it must have got itself printed there for her to

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read. But they faced each other, in confused silence, while Mrs. Winchester approached the bed and adjusted the pillows.

"I expect you're getting pretty anxious to have this nervous girl back at work. She'll be better for it and the doctor says she's quite able to go at any time. Shall we send her back to you tomorrow, Mr. Fraser?"

Faith turned toward her mother wearing a look of almost abject pleading. "Oh, Mamma, I don't think I can promise to go back quite so soon."

Mrs. Winchester smiled with a sort of unrelenting sweetness. "I think I'd try it," she said.

Dave felt resentment tugging at him, like an irresistible wind in the sail of a boat. Delicacy might forbid him to enter this conflict. But he found that he cared very little for Mrs. Winchester's kind of delicacy. It seemed to him that he was watching a drama that had been frequently reenacted between these women. Faith's look of pleading suggested that she knew herself to be beaten in advance. Her mother's will was at once stubborn and frivolous. She would force Faith out of bed and back to work simply to indulge her passion for being obeyed. Dave saw that beneath her genteel disguise of femininity Mrs. Winchester was as ruthless as a buccaneer. Impulse with her was sacred. Any whim to which she had lent the force of her will would be carried out grimly. Out of habit she would command and out of habit, Faith would obey.

"I'm going to have something to say about that," Dave announced aloud. "Miss Winchester won't be allowed to come back until she can assure me that she feels quite well. We value her too much to let her do half-hearted work."

Gratitude illuminated Faith's face, making it so bright and touching that Dave could not bear to look at her. Good God, how she needed to be protected! He turned toward Mrs. Winchester, hoping that he managed to look as grim as he felt. If he could defy her only in her own language of insinuation, he would make the insinuations strong and back them up with every possible demonstration of firmness.

But Mrs. Winchester was obviously not prepared to try to rule

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him as well as Faith. She modified her manner, making a discreet show of indulgent sympathy.

"I'm sure that's very generous. Faith dear, aren't you happy to realize that Mr. Fraser thinks so well of you? He's actually willing to pay for work that you're making no effort to do."

She laughed gently and moved across the room. Dave opened the door for her. At least she had cunning enough to know that it was time for her to go. If she had stayed a moment longer, his hostility might have come into the open. He had never met cruelty like hers before. With selfishness he was perfectly familiar. But it was selfishness of a sluggish kind that simply refused to be prodded into doing anything more than the impulse of the moment prompted. His mother had always neglected her duties. But she did not require anyone to take them over from her. If Lizzie had worked herself to death trying to make up for the derelictions of both father and mother, that was her own choice. No one demanded the sacrifice of her. But the brand of selfishness that used trickery, masquerading as delicacy of feeling, that was something that he could not stomach at all. And Mrs. Winchester wasn't so damned refined as she thought, either. She had betrayed the shabby meanness of her attitude toward Faith quite completely. To make sure of getting Faith's pay envelop she was quite willing to sacrifice Faith's comfort and even her health.

"Shall I ask Margaret to bring you some tea?" she asked at the door.

Dave smiled with the urbanity which this comedy of covert antagonism seemed to demand. "Thank you. I mustn't stay long. I don't want to tire the patient."

Mrs. Winchester bowed gracefully and pulled the door shut behind her. The atmosphere seemed instantly changed. In this new clarity, Dave felt sure that Faith must be able to read his unspoken thoughts; see his distrust of her mother and his love of herself. It embarrassed him to feel that all of the strong emotions of the past few moments must be exposed for Faith to see. It seemed like an heroic project just to cross the room and sit beside her. He could not manage it without her help.

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Then he saw that his embarrassment had communicated itself to her. She was flushed and confused as she fumbled with some papers on the table beside her.

"If you could stay just a moment. . . ."

It was all the assistance he needed. "Oh . . . as long as you like. . . ."

"I've worried about not being able to go to the office," she said, turning the roll of copy paper over and over in her hands. "I've wanted to do something to make up for my failure. . . ."

He started to protest, but she interrupted. "No, please let me tell you. These are some editorials I've written. They're about things I've thought should be done here in Drummond. Let's see. The first one's about playgrounds. I pass a school every day and I see the children playing in the street. They're so careless. I've watched them snatch a ball right from under the horses' hooves. It frightens me so that I shut my eyes when I pass there now. That's what other people must have been doing. Just shutting their eyes. I've written an editorial asking for school playgrounds. And this is one for Christmas. You always need one of those, don't you? And something else. I've forgotten what it is. Maybe you won't want to use them. I know it's your own work. But I just thought that since you're so busy. . . ."

The hand that held the sheets of paper dropped to her side. She turned away and Dave was appalled by the fear that she might be crying. He reached for the editorials.

"I'm delighted to have them. I don't know why I didn't think to suggest it myself. Something with the woman's angle." (No, no, that was wrong. It would antagonize her.) "I want you to go on. Write about general educational themes. Literary editorials, too. I can't do that kind of thing at all. It's been a serious lack."

She turned toward him. "You haven't even read them." She laughed, but he could see relief written large upon her face.

"I know what kind of work you do, Miss Winchester. The very best."

"I've lots of ideas if you will just let me experiment a little. When I come back to work I can easily fit it in with my other jobs."

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"I'm sure you can." Tears sprang into his own eyes. He tried to conceal them behind a jocular manner. "Whatever happened to you to make you such a whale for work?"

She laughed again, delightedly this time. "It is so exciting. I've hated being away. Is there anything more to tell about the suit?"

"No, except that the Trust Company continues to be very polite and placative since it was dropped."

"How they have climbed down, haven't they? Senator Hawkins isn't going to be angry at you, personally?"

"He can't afford to be. The whole thing has ended in a universal protestation to the very highest moral principle. People know that the Senator is a member of the Argus Board and our stand has given him a character. He's strutting around Washington, basking in the reflected glory of being a friend of the working man. It's very ironic that he should get credit for doing something that he actually fought every step of the way. Beautifully ironic. It serves the rascal right to be trapped into respectability. I'm afraid he won't find it a very comfortable position. And the best of it is, he won't dare to fight me."

He leaned forward, feeling more audacious than he had even felt in standing up before an audience. He had never known anything as exhilarating as this experience of risking everything that he valued on the utterance of a few words. He caught at Faith's hand.

"You must stop worrying about me and worry a little about yourself. . . . You need taking care of. Do you realize that? And do you realize something more? . . . that I want to be the one to do it."

She started to draw her hand away, but he held it fast.

"No, let me go on. I wish we could work together . . . always. Do you know, Faith, that I love you?"

She turned toward him with the utter candor and trust, the shining wonder that he had sometimes seen in children's faces. "Do you really?" was all she said.

It was absurd to feel that he could not trust his voice. He drew a deep breath and answered steadily: "Yes, very really."

"But that's wonderful! Because it's all I've thought of, lying

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here. Thinking that you might, hoping that some time I'd be answering: I love you."

He forgot that Ben Stanford was waiting; forgot it so completely that when at last he stumbled out onto the street in the dark, it did not surprise him that the sleigh wasn't there.

VII

(November, 1891)

FAITH sat looking out toward the smoky chimneys of the factory, thinking of Meadville. The image of the town was still clear in her mind. But it had lost all power to evoke any yearning in her. She would be glad to go back there some day. But it had ceased to be her world. It was strange how completely alien it seemed. Even John's letter could not make her remember how she had felt in the days when the very stones in the street were dear to her.

John's letter was about tragic things, too. She felt a little guilty that the news of his mother's death should stir so little emotion in her. His father had aged shockingly, John said. That touched her more deeply. She tightened her fingers as though in a hand-clasp, trying to recall the intense loyalty she had once felt for Mr. Haddon. But the effort was a failure. She was losing Mr. Haddon, too. He must have changed a great deal or he would not be permitting Legh to give up college to stay home and look after him. They weren't any of them the people she had thought them. Hero-worship had blinded her to their human weaknesses.

She pushed back her chair and stood up, feeling an intense irritation at her own smugness. I have no desire to be fair to them, she thought. Once I gave too much loyalty to John. Now some dark, nasty, subterranean working of pride makes me repudiate everything associated with his name. Why can't I forgive him for not being in love with me? If he couldn't, he couldn't and that should be the end of it. It must be the end. I'm not even in love with him any more. I have something so much better, stronger, more mature in my love for David. He's the very best there is.

Picking up her pencil, she walked to the window and stood tapping abstractedly on the pane, thinking of David. Presently

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she realized that someone else was in the room with her and glanced up into Margaret's flushed, excited face.

"Faith, I do hope you're not going to moon over that editorial all night. I'm giving a dinner party for you and David tonight. It would be rather nice if you were to come to it."

Faith did not answer for a moment. Margaret was sometimes so unreasonably irritable and irritating. But Faith knew that this defiance, with her own family, was simply the reverse side of her horrible docility with Poe Simpson. The challenges which she did not dare to fling at him for being drunk and over-bearing, she tossed at random toward Faith and Kathie, sometimes even toward Mamma.

"I wasn't working at all," Faith confessed at last. "I'll dress right away."

Margaret picked up the pad on which Faith had written the title of an editorial and read it out scornfully. *The Way to World Peace!* I hope you're not expecting to settle that before dinner. Could you see that David brushes his hair before Artie Holmes comes? It's so important that he should carry a good impression of us all back to Meadville."

Why was it so important? Faith thought angrily. Who was Artie Holmes that his approval should be so obsequiously wooed? Nothing but an overgrown boy with as little mentality as it was possible for a clever person to have. He had stayed on at Princeton as coach of the football team after he had been graduated. There was a kind of poetic justice in his being allowed to play football all his busy, turbulent, intellectually empty life. But to act as though David had to be brushed and smoothed in order to make him presentable to Artie Holmes: that was outrageous! David who had more real courage in his little finger and more mentality in his untidy hair than Artie Holmes had in his whole sleek body!

Involuntarily Faith brought the clenched fist of her right hand against the open palm of the left in a violent, little gesture of resentment. Why did Mamma and Margaret and Kathie have to be so intolerably vulgar about making good impressions? Probably it was because Poe Simpson was such a disappointment. They

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felt that they were slipping out of the aristocratic society to which they had belonged in Meadville. But if they felt that they were losing ground why couldn't they be decently silent about it? At least they needn't think they could practice their snobbery on David. He had friends among the people whom Mamma regarded as important and also among the people whom Mamma would snub. But they were real friends wherever he encountered them. That was because he had a genuine gift of generosity . . . a warm, tolerant inclusive love of people. Faith had seen him receive a ruffled subscriber, who imagined that his reputation had been slighted in a news story, and treat him with such a gracious respect for the hurt ego that the angry man went away with the impression of having made a fast friendship. David's wealth of good-will made the whole Meadville temperament seem sordidly poverty-stricken.

"I don't think I want David's hair brushed," she said aloud. "It's more characteristic and characterful the way he wears it. Did I ever recite to you the doggerel I wrote about it?"

Conscious that she was outraging Margaret by seeming to indulge in a frivolity at a moment of crisis, she recited the jingle:

Tall and black
With a quip and a crack
And hair like woven wire.
And he twists the wisp
That shades his brow:
That's Slim,
That's him.

But Margaret would not relent. "I still think he ought to brush his hair," she said.

Her humorless gravity made Faith conscious of her own absurd annoyance.

"Very well. Just this once, for the honor and glory of Meadville, I'll see that his hair is combed. But I'm not going to allow it to become a habit. We're being inspected by too many of the august ambassadors from the east."

"By whom beside Artie Holmes?" Margaret demanded with a

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strange and touching mixture of suspicion, anxiety and anticipation.

"John's coming out in the spring vacation. His letter says so."

"You didn't tell us that before."

"I hadn't any intention of concealing anything, Margaret. I suppose that news was overshadowed by the news of his mother's death."

Margaret's eyes narrowed in puzzled concentration. "What in the world can he want out here?"

"Maybe he's bringing a debating team from Cornell to compete with the college just as Artie Holmes brought his football team. Maybe he wants to see if we live in tepees now that we've moved west. Maybe he's heard that we don't brush our hair and is coming to verify the scandalous report."

"He wants to see you, of course." Margaret made the statement as though it were a grudging admission. "You've no right to let him come, now that you're engaged."

"But that can't be," Faith protested lightly.

"Well, tell me I lie," Margaret answered, flouncing irritably out of the room. Her voice came floating back up the stairs. "Please dress now and not an hour from now, Faith. They'll be coming back from the football game soon."

Faith walked to the closet and took down the Robin Hood dress. David had given it the name because she had worn it, for the first time, to go with him to see Henry Clay Barnaby and the Bostonians in the opera. She had been extravagant with herself for once and bought the very dress she wanted, because David had once said that brown brought out the gold of her hair. Bands of brown velvet circled the hem, the wrists, the throat, enriching the faun-colored broadcloth. It was a pretty dress. The excitement of enclosing what she had always considered her drab person in this soft splendor was enhanced by the foreknowledge of the pleasure that she would see in David's eyes.

But the image of John kept intruding into her mind, setting itself up beside that of David. Could it possibly be true, as Margaret said, that he was coming especially to see her? That could only be because . . . well, what was she so afraid of saying?

... because he had found that he was in love with her, after all. What did she think of that possibility? she wondered.

For an instant, an almost suffocating sense of his nearness made her gasp. Yes, he was there in the depths of her mind unchanged, despite all that she said about him so glibly. Something in her would acknowledge an eternal allegiance to that John. He remained the sum of all perfections, no matter how many mocking things she could find to say about him. She could say that his letter to her was stiff and formal and graceless. That was true. She could say that he lacked enterprise. His decision to give his fine mind to the safe little academic world and spend his life as a teacher of law seemed to show that. She could say that he was selfish. The fact that he had given no thought to her until it was too late made that very clear. And yet in her imagination he remained without a flaw.

It wasn't fair that she should be the victim of love for a ghost. David was real. He was kind and thoughtful and full of exciting variety and courage. His world was one in which people really lived and fought and got work done. Papa would think better of David than of John, for all John's learning. David gave some actual thought to the creation of the good life that Papa revered so much. John was just a by-stander, an observer. It was David whom she should want. But a kind of awful certainty flashed through her, now hot, now cold, like an illness. She knew that it was John she actually wanted.

The knocker sounded at the front door. It could only be David. Kathie would have brought Lovatt back with her from the game. Artie Holmes had said that he would be a little late. Her fingers trembled as she fastened the bands of velvet at her wrists. The knocker sounded again, less loud this time, rather like a diffident plea for attention. It was horrible to have to see him now while she was in the very midst of her doubts. It wasn't fair to David, or to herself. Her head began to ache in the strange way that it had ached ever since her accident. The pains no longer broke like fireworks in her brain, but they shot up her neck just as before. There was always the threat that they would begin to burst at any moment.

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Standing on the threshold of her room, she hesitated, realizing that she had forgotten something. Oh, yes, it was her ridiculous promise to Margaret to brush David's hair. It was maddening to have to subject him to that humiliation, particularly at a moment when she was not loving him as she should. But if she did not keep her promise, Margaret would parade her grievance conspicuously. She picked up Kathie's silver-backed brush and comb and hurried down stairs.

David took her in his arms, standing in the unlighted vestibule. She felt overwhelmed as always by the exuberance of his embrace and was glad of the darkness so that he should not have to see the doubt that must be written large on her face. Oh, John, John, she thought, why did you wait and lead us all into this trouble?

She led David into the living-room.

"Where are the others?" Faith asked. "Is the game over?"

"They won't be here for a little while. There's still the last quarter to play. But it's been such an awful slaughter that I couldn't bear to see it."

"A slaughter for whom?"

David laughed indulgently. "You're fortunate to have said that to someone who loves you very dearly. Almost anyone else in the world would regard the question as heresy and turn you over to the Inquisition. Our college boys are winning, of course."

Another shadow of worry fell over Faith's mind. Artie Holmes would not be in a very happy mood for the party.

"Is it really such a bad defeat?"

"The score board said 34 to 0. But I'm sure that couldn't be right. I counted more than 34 dead Princetonians in one heap." David put out a hand to smooth away the puzzled frown from her forehead. "No, my innocent, they don't really count the score that way." He took her hands and held them away from her sides. "You're wearing the Robin Hood dress. Oh, darling, you look lovely."

No, no, her mind protested, you mustn't say that to me. I'm not what you are thinking about me. I'm not innocent and child-like. I'm not being played upon for the first time by the excitement of a man's affection. I'm not loyal to you.

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But even while she was making these accusations, she realized that she looked up eagerly to feed her vanity upon his admiration. It was not true that she had had a nourishing affection from any other man. Not from John certainly who, no matter what he might have felt, had always taken the pleasantries for granted and never paid her compliments at all. It was David who had made her conscious of many lovely possibilities in life about which she had known nothing. The delight of joking and going out in the evening with an escort and wearing pretty dresses and being told that she was pretty: all the frivolities for which she had scorned Kathie and of which she had been secretly jealous. They had been added unto her with David's love. She had wanted them all the time and needed them all the time, she admitted with a kind of fierce possessiveness: wanted to be told as David had told her that her profile had an aristocratic, cameo-like perfection; that her tapering fingers were exquisite; that her hair was like spun gold. Something had happened in childhood to freeze her into premature spinsterhood or, what was worse, a Saint Cecilia smugly enjoying her martyrdom. It was David who had saved her from the fate of being permanently committed to this rôle. He had melted her, a little at a time, with his praise and his affection. And yet she was willing to lose all that simply to be once more in control of John who had given her nothing. It was stupid and whimsical and childish. She wished that David would take her in his arms once more and keep her by force from any such folly. She wanted to be held.

David stood on the far side of the fireplace, fumbling in his pocket. Faith saw that he had been as deeply preoccupied with his thoughts as she had been with her own.

He smiled apologetically. "Darling, may I show you something? You may think it strange that I should want to. But there is an explanation."

Faith held out her hand and took the letter that David offered. It was signed, Estelle. There was a line complimenting him on his engagement, and then another which read: "Now I must teach myself no longer to compare all other men with you."

An unreasoning fear made her grip the neat, gray sheet close

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in her hand. She looked again at the lines traced out in a firm and beautiful pattern. They had been written by a woman who knew how to seem magnanimous and yet to beg at the same time. She was an intelligent, a subtle woman, and David had loved her. Why did she not welcome this opportunity to escape. She could release David and release herself at the same time. Her heart beat fast as she returned the note.

"She wants you to come back," Faith managed to say steadily.

"Yes, I think she does."

"Do you want to go?"

He turned toward her with the unmistakable candor of surprise. "How can you think that? You're all she ever seemed to me. And so much more."

"You must mean that, David. I couldn't take you away from someone you wanted more."

It was strange to have said that, Faith thought. She needed no assurance from David. Her statement had been either a plea to be released, or a rebuke to herself from wanting to be released. She did not quite know which.

Then, all at once she was caught up out of her doubts, out of any lingering thought of John, by the urgency with which David was speaking to her.

"Darling, don't you know why I showed you that letter? I wanted you to understand how dead all that past is. Dead, buried and forgotten. Everything that does not have to do with you. When I thought of Estelle and tried to imagine her in your place it made me feel dead and buried, too . . . as though I were being asked to crawl in under my own tombstone. All the life I have is with you and for you. If I were to lose you, Faith . . . yes, that's exactly what I should lose, the only faith I have or ever have had."

The warmth of his rich, deep voice filled her ears like music heard in church at a moment when the organ rolled out its notes of exultation. She had felt like this, sometimes, sitting beside Papa, thinking hopefully about what life was to be. It was good to be needed. It was good to have a duty that was clear and unmistakable. She must think no more about John. He was no

longer the one. It was David to whom she must give her love and her loyalty; David with whom she must make the good life that they both wanted.

She felt free and happy. The turning toward John had been only a moment's mistake . . . an excitement springing out of vanity. She had wanted only to cure the hurt that he had caused her by seeming not to want her. But that was a petty emotion, a childish feeling like every feeling that she had ever had for John. But her feeling for David—that was not childish. It was rich and warm and mature.

She went to him and smoothed back the lock at which he had been worrying.

"David, I am so glad," she said.

He took her in his arms. Now she could let him hold her as he liked. There was no longer any feeling of guilt except that strange one of feeling somehow inadequate when he kissed her. She did not know how to be kissed. Perhaps that was because kisses were not very explicitly described in the *Aeneid* or *Paradise Lost* or the poems of Phoebe Cary. I don't know anything but what I've learned from books, she thought disparagingly. But I can learn. . . . I can learn anything.

Standing in the circle of his arms, she laughed aloud at the delight of being once more *en rapport* with him. Then she drew away.

"David, there's something I must do," she said and ran to get the brush and comb where she had dropped them on the window-seat in the hall.

Over and over again throughout the evening, she felt an exultant expectancy in her new intimacy with David. Her pre-occupation dimmed the realization that for their guest of honor the evening was one of agonizing trial.

Artie Holmes had entered the room with the distracted air of one who could not quite recall the names of his hosts or even the reason for this meeting. He wanted to talk of nothing but the afternoon's disaster. Because David was the only one who seemed capable of taking a sympathetic interest, it was to David rather than to his old neighbors that he turned.

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"The night on the train was miserably uncomfortable," Faith heard him complain. "Three of my best men should actually have been in bed. And the conditions on the field . . . my players aren't used to wading through six inches of mud."

To all these protestations, spoken with an air of delirious defiance, David responded with the patient acquiescence of a man visiting a sick-room.

For Kathie, too, the evening was a disappointment. She had wished to display her radiant self and her faultlessly dressed, sweet-tempered Lovatt so that Artie might take word of her triumph back to Meadville. But Artie would not look at Kathie at all and to Lovatt's gentle efforts to enter the conversation, Artie responded with an impatient brusquerie that made Faith wince.

Then suddenly Artie's face seemed to go all to pieces. His pent-up, explosive emotions shattered the last reserve of composure. Even his angry defiance deserted him. He dropped his head forward on the table and sobbed bitterly.

There was a moment of abashed silence before a confused babble of consolation broke out. In that moment Faith's eyes met those of Kathie across the table. She was looking triumphant, like a fanatic who sees an enemy put to torture. Once this man had humiliated her and she had lived to see him humiliated. God had delivered Artie Holmes into her hands. As long as she lives, Faith thought, she will never experience a deeper satisfaction.

And cruel as she knew it to be Faith could not quite reject a share in that satisfaction. The past was dead. Meadville could be forgotten. Meadville that had always managed to make itself seem superior had, through Artie Holmes, let its ideals of reserve and dignity be trailed in the dust. And through David, Drummond had triumphed.

Never again would she be jealous of the past. The present was good. Yes, and the future would be better.

VIII

(January, 1892)

KATHIE and Lovatt had kept a record of the wedding presents, and, as Faith turned the pages of the note-book, she was astonished at the wealth into which she and David had come. Not the wealth represented by the array of bric-a-brac, but the incredible wealth of friendship. David, of course, was largely responsible for that. His generosity had brought its reward, at this climax of his life. The men in the office must have made almost frightening inroads on their private resources to buy the chest of silver. The huge tea tray, so heavy that Faith could scarcely lift it, which Senator and Mrs. Hawkins had sent, was a copy of their own. It would look like a haughty and contemptuous stranger in the only flat she and David could ever afford. They would have to build a shrine around it. President and Mrs. Chapman of the University had sent a check for the furnishing of their home and the President Emeritus who was living on a tiny pension had autographed each copy of his complete set of books for them.

Faith had made no effort to remember who were the donors of all the pieces of cut-glass and bric-a-brac. The table that held them was irreverently referred to as the zoo, because the shapes were so quaintly suggestive of long-necked storks and thick-bodied hippopotami. They were all ornamented with tortuous veins of gold and glimpses of sunset over the Grand Canal.

When he was shown the display David had observed that all they needed in order to start a fine arts museum was a copy of the *Laocöon*. In answer to Lovatt's characteristically bemused question as to what the *Laocöon* might be, David had launched into a solemn improvisation concerning an ancient Greek father and his sons who were given to seeing very large and formidable snakes under the most trying circumstances.

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"I think," he concluded, "that they were driven into delirium tremens by their wife and mother who was founder of the W.C.T.U."

Lovatt smiled with baffled, but indulgent, sweetness and bent once more over his fastidiously neat little entries in the notebook. "Poor little Galahad," Faith thought as she looked at Lovatt. "His strength is as the strength of ten pollywogs because his heart is empty. I wish I could think up a Holy Grail for him to go in search of."

Since their marriage Kathie and Lovatt had been living with old Madame Fleming in the great, ugly mansion at Chippewa. Kathie hated her mother-in-law and had elaborate stories of intrigue to tell about their intra-mural warfare. The truth, as Faith suspected, was that Madame Fleming knew her son to be a fool and was afraid of giving him money. Lovatt was determined to start a nursery, about which he knew nothing, and Kathie was his loyal ally in trying to bully the old lady into backing the venture. Faith's wedding had interrupted the campaign, and Lovatt was obviously enjoying the armistice. But Kathie was longing to be in arms again.

"Do you know," she said at the climax of a long, detailed and very bitter arraignment, "Lovatt's mother actually insinuated that I had taken money from her purse."

It was one of those squalid secrets of family life which should never have been confessed, Faith thought drearily, as she and Kathie worked together over the alterations of the wedding dress. And it might horribly be true. Kathie was just stupid enough, and just defiant enough, to try to revenge herself on her mother-in-law by stealing from her. The confession left a loop-hole for the abhorrent fear that Madame Fleming's distrust might be deserved.

But Kathie's life was her own. If she wanted to make a petty drama of intrigue out of it that was her ridiculous right. Faith no longer felt any moral obligation to offer advice. Kathie would only hate her for it and accuse her of taking Madame Fleming's part against her own sister. Faith took refuge from Kathie's worries by pretending to an intense preoccupation with her own affairs.

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"Do you think the dress will be as becoming to me as it was to you?" she asked, holding it up at arm's length.

Kathie obviously tried to be magnanimous.

"Oh, I don't think the wimple effect will make your nose look too big. That's the only thing I worry about. I had the dress copied from the one worn by that Van Tyle girl when she married Prince What's-his-name. It's supposed to make you look like a medieval madonna. And that ought to be all right. There's a-oh you know—rather a churchy look about you." She interrupted herself with a sharp exclamation. "Faith, do be careful of what you're doing. Your fingers are all thumbs. You must be careful of the dress because, of course, I want it back for my daughters."

Really, Faith thought, I'm not in the habit of sliding down banisters or dancing the cake-walk in a wedding dress! That would be more in keeping with your talents. And after all, I paid for the dress!—But she had no intention of quarrelling with Kathie now. She did not want to spoil the memory of her wedding. And anyway Kathie was right. She did not know the first thing about sewing or cooking. She'd have to get some books and learn.

"Of course," Kathie was going on, "Margaret's baby will be born before mine. If hers is a girl, she'll wear it to be married in. Let's start a family tradition."

Faith dropped the dress and rose to catch Kathie into her arms. "I didn't know that you were going to have a baby, too."

Kathie released herself from Faith's arms. "Oh, yes, it happened right away." Then she looked up eagerly. "Faith, has Mamma talked to you about marriage? I mean, about what it's really like. You know, what actually happens?"

The girl's eyes were gleaming with the zeal of the recent initiate. Faith felt suddenly in awe of her sister's superior knowledge. But it was not a pleasant experience. For once her strong impulse was to push knowledge from her. There was something dark and unholy about Kathie's desire to be instructive. Feeling as though she were in the presence of a threatening mystery, Faith wanted only to run away. She was as dizzy as she often felt at the onset of a sick-headache.

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"Well, it's perfectly terrible and I think you ought to be warned."

She wouldn't be warned, Faith thought defiantly. That was all there was about it. David was generous and courteous, always. Nothing that had to do with him could possibly be what Kathie said. She was trying to create drama as she always did. It was like treachery to David even to listen to her.

Glancing out of the window Faith pretended to become absorbed in the postman's slow progress up the walk. "I think I'm getting more mail," she said. And then to cover her retreat toward the door, she added: "Why do you suppose mailmen always look so skeptical? It's as though they knew that nothing could be as exciting as people always imagine their letters are going to be."

"Of course, if you don't want to know . . ." Kathie called after her petulantly.

Why should I want to know anything that you can tell me? Faith's rebellious mind retorted. I trust David.

"I'll close the door," she said aloud. "There's a draft from the hall."

I must hide or she'll follow me downstairs with her delectable scandals. How ridiculous! As though I didn't know David too well to be frightened of anything when I'm with him.

She took her letters into the closet under the stairs and read them by the fading light that came through the stained glass window. Several of them were from Meadville people. Buford wanted her to know that his present was on the way. He was sorry it must be late. He was coming home from Oxford in the fall to be an instructor in English at Williams. Had Faith happened to see his little story in *The Youth's Companion*? It was called: "What Sir Gawain Knew." The *Atlantic Monthly* had accepted a poem. He wished Faith would tell him what she really thought of both the story and the poem because he valued her criticism. She must write him a long letter about the lucky Mr. Fraser. Buford felt entitled to judge whether or not he was worthy, though of course no one could be really. And yet Buford knew, since Faith had chosen him, that he must be very fine.

It was a shame for her not to have written Buford about his lovely story. The whole thing was done with such sensitiveness and taste. She had not been able to write because what she really wanted to say was that at last Mrs. Waldron was to be justified, through her son. Faith had picked up one of the Violet stories, a year ago, simply because she wanted to be reminded of Mrs. Waldron, and she had been appalled by its sick sentimentality and the unreality of all the characters. She was embarrassed by the necessity of repudiating so old and so wonderful a friend. But Mrs. Waldron's life had been lived for Buford. And now he was on the road that seemed destined to lead him to greatness. When she wrote to thank Mrs. Waldron for the beautiful Florentine shawl and for the check, she must tell her with what perfect taste and what delicacy of feeling Buford wrote. That was what Mrs. Waldron would most like to hear. Probably the Violet stories no longer mattered even to her.

The warmth of Buford's letter reminded Faith of the pang of distress that John's note had caused her. It was stiff and perfunctory. He and his father and Legh had combined to send her a whole shelf-full of books. They were thoughtfully chosen and Faith was delighted to find among them one by Herbert Spencer on education. She would need that now if she were to be entrusted with the responsibility of rearing children of her own. But John's letter, speaking for all the Haddons, had made her feel that they were saying good-bye. The link with Buford was strengthened by all of his happy allusions to what he was doing and by his interest in what her life was to be. But John gave her nothing except the formal greeting of an acquaintance. He said nothing more about his plan for a visit. The link was wearing thin. No, it was actually broken. Could he be bitter against her for not waiting? What kind of servility had he expected . . . ?

The thought was cut short by the sound of the closet door, creaking open. For an instant Faith thought that it must be Kathie pursuing her. Suppressing a guilty laugh, she tried to hide behind the dusty red portières that Margaret had taken out of the back living parlor so that the rooms would open up effectively for the wedding.

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But it was Mamma coming to hang up Poe Simpson's coat. There was an example of servility: the way Mamma and Margaret waited on that fat, sluggish man. Thank heaven, Faith's relationship with David would never be like that. David wanted an intellectual companion. It would be such joy always to study with him and be stimulated by him. He would give back to her everything that she'd lost. From David she could even get the equivalent of a college education. Something better, really, because it was warm, live knowledge that he had . . . knowledge related close to the problems of real life.

"Faith, what are you doing here!" Mamma called out, seeing her at last.

"Nothing, Mamma. I just wanted to be alone to read my letters."

"You . . . you weren't feeling morbid?"

"Of course not, Mamma."

"I thought you might have been . . . girls are sometimes morbid at times like these." Mamma sighed and came pushing her way through the coats to stand beside Faith and catch at her hand. "You mustn't . . . mustn't do anything more today. You must save your energy, you know. Tomorrow will be a most important day."

"I'm feeling perfectly well, Mamma."

"But you must not let the excitement of these days tire you. It's extremely important that you should not be tired."

Mamma's grip closed tighter on her fingers, clasped and unclasped and clasped again as though she were deeply agitated. Faith studied her face in amazement. Mamma had never acted like this before. Mamma wished to say something to her and at the same time quite agonizingly did not want to say it. Probably it was the same thing that Kathie tried so hard to say. Faith blushed. She could not refuse to let Mamma speak as she had refused to listen to Kathie. The two women stood facing each other in a desperate state of discomfort, linked by their tense and groping hands, by their distress and by their mutual desire to escape.

Then Mamma's brow cleared.

"You've always been a dutiful girl, Faith. If you always do

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your duty as submissively and conscientiously as you have done in the past, your marriage will be secure. Just remember, if at any time, things seem difficult, that duties are not always pleasant. You've never shrunk from yours. I know that I can trust you to be quiet and faithful and uncomplaining."

She turned quickly and all but ran away. Never before had Faith seen Mamma so shaken out of her poise and her conviction that what she did was right.

What were they trying to tell her about marriage that was so difficult? . . . that required such an extraordinary degree of fortitude? What was there that Mamma could endure, that Kathie could endure for which she was unfitted? But the vague anxiety that they had let drop upon her lifted as she remembered that neither of them had the rudimentary beginnings of fortitude. Naturally, it was always hard to live with someone else. It had been hard for Mamma to live with Papa because she had never really loved him. In all Faith's youth she had never heard Mamma refer affectionately to Papa. There was an implied criticism in all that she said. It was hard for Kathie to live with Lovatt because he was a fool. But none of that applied to her own prospect of living with David whom she loved and trusted and whose hopes and needs she had come to understand through a long period of association in the office. With them it would surely be different. Mamma's experience and Kathie's had no application to her own. She would not let them frighten her.

She woke on the day of her wedding in a state of pleasant confusion. It was difficult to realize that she was the central figure of so great a drama. Mamma and Margaret and Kathie circled round and round her, concerning themselves with aspects of her life to which they had been indifferent before. Her appearance suddenly meant much to them. She must stay in bed all day until time for the ceremony so that she would look rested. When she could not eat her supper, fearing a headache, Margaret brought her tea and the most appetizing bits of cinnamon toast. Kathie dressed her hair. There were last minute excursions and borrowing from the wardrobe of everyone to make her own sufficient. The feverish movement of the pageant swept over her;

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snatched her out of bed to try on the re-modelled dress, solicitously laid her down again. Faith could scarcely recognize herself as heroine of the drama. She only waited to be summoned and then dutifully allowed herself to be forgotten again.

When the strains of the wedding march reached her, the world had quite ceased to be real. The sound was pleasant coming up the stairs from the dining room where the musicians, whom Ben Stanford had insisted on sending, were concealed behind palms. She was conscious of her own movement as she went down the stairs only because the music sounded nearer and nearer. The gathering of friends was as dim before her eyes as the audience had always been when she spoke for the debating society. Her attention fixed itself, when she reached the end of the improvised aisle, on David's excited, frightened face, giving encouragement but asking for it, too. His friend, Dr. Stanley of the Unitarian church, read the service out of lips that were pursed up like a baby's. She heard her own voice responding as though from a great distance.

The reception afterward was like a curious dream in which all the people she had ever known in Drummond, the ones she had interviewed and heard speak and had pointed out in the theater, passed before her. And then with a strange suddenness, it was all over. Kathie helped her change her clothes, babbling, babbling as Kathie always did and then she was at the side door being kissed tearfully by Mamma and a moment later helped into a carriage by David himself.

Then the dream became stranger still. She was alone in a berth on a train, removing the clothes that had just been put on her. David's overcoat hung against the curtain and the intimacy of undressing even in the presence of his coat seemed unbelievable, something irregular and curiously graceless. Then, the strangest sensation of all: that of seeing David in nightclothes, standing against the curtains, seeming to ask permission to come closer. He was beside her, kissing her, whispering out an urgent torrent of endearments.

Later, she heard his heavy breathing beside her and knew that he was asleep. This was the mystery at which Kathie had hinted.

HIGH-NOON

This was the duty about which Mamma had told her. Lying there, feeling more dismally alone than ever before in her life, she saw how she had been tricked. All that elaborate effort to make the real world stop existing, all that disguising of the familiar in the details of a great dramatic pageant with the bride as the center of interest, was designed to confuse a woman's mind and make her accept blindly the more terrible confusion of what was to follow. What she minded was not the physical pain. She had suffered more than that. It was not even the intrusion into the most carefully guarded recess of privacy. Any humiliation was of much the same sort. Her distress rose from the thought that two people, who had loved each other so sincerely and trusted each other so deeply, should be suddenly forced into an intimacy which each of them found somehow shameful. If this was the way of life, why must it be handled so clumsily with all this public ceremony, with people looking on, people speculating? If David had need of her body, she was willing to give it to him. She would cut off her right hand for him, if that could help him. But the shabby pretense at splendor and mystery was what she resented. Why had not someone said, without ogling or wringing of hands, that marriage is the lying down together of a man and a woman? She could have prepared herself for that. But an hour of wild abandonment at the end of an elaborate primitive celebration like the slaughter of a sacred animal: that was what she could not forgive.

And David could not forgive it, either. He had been courteous at first; then possessed by a crazy determination to do violence to his habit of courtesy; and then, finally, ashamed. He had wanted to get away from her, immediately after wanting to be so near. And he had escaped by falling asleep.

So she was utterly alone. If he had talked to her before; if he had talked to her afterward, she could have adjusted herself to anything. But to do battle with her like an enemy who was already fallen and passive and then to desert her: that seemed irreconcilable with all that she had ever thought about him.

As the train joggled and rumbled on toward Chicago, she turned toward the window and buried her head in the pillow so that her crying might not wake him.

IX

(December, 1893)

FAITH sat in the big, drafty kitchen with the paraphernalia of cooking spread out on the table beside her. Before beginning to prepare a meal she always got together the things she was going to need. It gave her a kind of stage-fright to find, in the midst of a culinary crisis, that something essential was missing. To have to get up and look for it in the cabinet broke her concentration on the book.

She bent her head over the recipe. Season to taste, it said. Whose taste? Supposing you had no taste and had to learn everything from the beginning because you had always been excluded from the kitchen and required to get on with your writing. Well, she would have to learn. Already the cook-book was filled with annotations based on her own failures and successes.

There had been more failures than successes, she had to confess. The incident of the bay leaves had been a little humiliating. One of her recipes had called for them. When the grocer asked how much to send, she had said nonchalantly, that she thought a quarter's worth would be enough. . . . There would be bay leaves to bequeath to her grandchildren!

As though in protest that she should be thinking of grandchildren before her first child was born, the baby gave a great thump against her side. "Rest, rest, perturbed spirit," she thought and tried once more to fix her mind on the cook-book. At least the story of the bay leaves had made a useful addition to the repertory of anecdotes at her own expense. Mrs. Veblen laughed heartily at it this afternoon.

Faith heard David at the door. Marking her place in the book, she got up and ran to meet him.

"Darling! You're home early. I've barely started dinner."

She felt his cheek close to her own. "A little early," he said.

"The new electric cars go so much faster that I'm always ahead of appointments nowadays. I don't know how else to explain this puzzling tendency toward perfect behavior."

"You are perfect, David."

"Yes, I've noticed that." He held her close. "You've re-created me in your own image, my dear. I'm so unlike that great lumbering ox, Dave Fraser, that I hardly know myself any more. I'm thinking of asking for a letter of introduction."

She drew away intending to light the gas, but David stopped her.

"Can't we sit in the dark a minute? I don't want to think about dinner. I don't want to think about anything but how nice it's been with you. A good life." He sighed deeply. Then after a moment's silence he asked anxiously: "For you, too?"

"Wonderful, David. You know that."

She had been distracted by the guilty thought that perhaps he was indifferent to dinner because her cooking wasn't good enough. She managed as well as she could on his salary. Her own savings went to help support Mamma. But David was used to good things. He had been a little spoiled by being the pet of all the rich people in Drummond. But, as she allowed herself to be drawn down onto his knees, she knew that that wasn't fair to David. He didn't think of things like that. He really liked their life because it was busy and useful; because they talked endlessly and laughed a great deal. He was tired now and wanted nothing but companionship. She would tell him all about her afternoon and make him laugh.

"What have you been reading?" David asked. It was the traditional formula which they used to unlock their secrets to each other. Faith settled back comfortably. "Some frivolous time-killer like Plato's Republic I suppose," David went on. "Or no! you're still the victim of your mad infatuation with Dr. Holt and the *Care and Feeding of Infants!*"

"I did read a few more chapters." She shuddered and drew close to David. "It's hard to keep my mind on it. I get to thinking of those dreadful pictures of the babies with big heads . . . the hydrocephalic ones."

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His arm went tight about her. "Darling, the doctor says that happens about once in a million times. And it won't happen to us. God has given special orders. No nonsense like that this time! He said."

"Do you think I'll manage to be a good mother?" Faith asked.

"The best."

"At least it won't be for want of trying. I'm going to learn everything that anyone knows."

"But today you've read only a few chapters. What kind of way is that to conquer wisdom? You'll have to overcome your lazy habits, my girl. If you do nothing all day but write a few editorials, edit the cook-book and scrub all the floors in the flat. . . ."

Faith relaxed in the familiar comfort of his raillery.

"This was my afternoon at Mrs. Blum's, David."

"Oh, then of course you've been pursuing culture to its very source. Is she still the Florentine princess with a wonderful background of Travertine marble, gold ornaments and red curtains? I believe she's a little confused about just whom she married. She thinks she's Mrs. Lorenzo de'Medici Blum."

"I know she seems theatrical," Faith admitted ruefully. "But she has to be. She lives in the past because she can't endure the present. Mrs. Blum sits in her Florentine palace, reading Dante, because no one in Drummond will invite her to dinner. They treat her like a pariah, David, for no other reason than that she's a Jewess."

He was silent for a moment. "I think there's another reason," he said at last. "It's because she has let Drummond see that she's superior. We're very severe in this town with people who betray any superiority."

"But it isn't that she wants to seem superior. She just is. Why, she's able to translate *The Divine Comedy* as easily as I read the *Argus*! And she's as excited by it as I am by the morning news. It's real to her. She has a beautiful crisp enunciation. She reads simply, but with just the right emphasis on the revealing word."

"Yes, Mrs. Blum's a courageous woman. She doesn't allow herself to be cheated by the fact that she lives in a cruel society."

HIGH-NOON

She just creates for herself a world that she likes better. You love it, too, don't you, Faith?"

"It's the world I've always wanted. And you gave it to me, David."

"Oh no, darling!"

There was something very like fear in his voice. Faith wished that there were a light so that she could study his face. David drew her close and went on reassuringly:

"You met Mrs. Blum when I sent you to interview her about the new excavations in Rome. You wrote a good story. That's why she asked you to join her class."

"She wouldn't have remembered me, if I hadn't been your wife. I want to owe it to you, David. I'm being terribly spoiled and I love it. You've given me such a varied life. I like going to Mrs. Blum's and I like going to the Old Settlers' Ball in a dress that cost us far too much."

Once more she was aware that he was troubled. "David gives and David takes away," he sighed. "Blessed be the name of David."

"What do you mean? You've never taken away. Only given."

She sat upright and faced him, trying to study his face in the dark.

"I suppose I was thinking about money. I've given you very little of that."

"Oh money!" she laughed, feeling as she often did the luxurious comfort of needing little. "I've so much more richness in my life than poor Mrs. Blum can ever have with all her money."

"Probably her life is a little meagre. That's why she loves Dante with such a passionate, possessive love."

"David, is Mr. Blum really such a hard and unscrupulous man? Mrs. Veblen says that's why they're snubbed. I thought he was a very able lawyer."

"He is. What do you suppose people mean by unscrupulous, Faith? If all the hard men I know were excluded from the Old Settlers' Ball, they could hold the party in the nearest telephone booth." He drew her head back against his shoulder. "Tell me what it was like today? You read a passage from Dante and then

discussed it and finally sat down to a simple little tea that didn't cost a cent more than ten dollars."

Faith laughed. "Mrs. Veblen was very bad. She said it must have been nice for Dante, sitting comfortably at home, consigning all his friends to Hell and, then, gloating over their pains. She's going to try it herself some day, she said."

"I hope Mrs. Blum was properly severe with such levity."

"Oh yes, she pointed out that Dante shouldn't be accused of personal animus. He condemned not men, but unsound moral qualities. Mrs. Veblen was quite meek."

"But humorously unconvinced, I'll bet. . . ."

"I half agreed with Mrs. Veblen, David. He was rather mean."

"Oh, not Dante! . . . You mustn't let Mrs. Veblen pervert your mind."

"But she's so sensible."

"Of course. She's embroidered her initials all over common sense as though it were a bath towel."

Yes, that was like Mrs. Veblen, Faith thought. All the iron-clad conventions were defied in her very appearance. One gesture of protest had been the appropriate one of discarding the corset which Mrs. Veblen regarded as an offense against the principles of esthetics quite as much as against the principles of health. The quasi-Grecian robe which she always wore was sometimes of bright blue silk, sometimes of white. On great occasions it underwent a brilliant metamorphosis into cloth of gold. But it never varied in design. Beneath its undulating liquefaction, Mrs. Veblen's ample figure cascaded downward, broadening out into an impressive delta in the region of the hips. But she was beautiful, in spite of her eccentricity. The finely chiselled features, the eyes that seemed so full of humorous and tolerant perception, created an image of serenity that Faith admired and envied. David must understand that she did not underrate Mrs. Veblen even if she was a little literal-minded about Dante.

"You know, Mrs. Veblen is a wonderful woman, really. Half her time is spent trying to make people in stores improve conditions for the shop girls. That, and trying to get the suffrage for women."

"Has she made you believe in suffrage, too?"

"Of course, David. It has to come. Why should women be excluded from. . . ."

"Not women like you, Faith."

"Or Mrs. Veblen."

"All right. We'll divide the earth between you." His arm closed so tight about her that the pressure of his fingers hurt. "Oh, darling, why must you believe so firmly in that millennium of yours?"

He was making fun of her now, as he sometimes did when she allowed herself to become too earnest. She drew away from the physical pressure of his arm and the mental pressure of his irony.

"It's not a ridiculous millennium, David. Just the good life we've always talked about. You believe in it, too."

"I don't always know what I believe, Faith. Maybe I believe only in good people like the Veblens. The old judge is a character, too. Funny looking little Norwegian immigrant. When he's all dressed up for a party he looks as though he'd stumbled out-of-doors in his flannels and got tangled up in the rest of his clothes, hanging on the line. There's a legend that he always has his laundry-mark stamped in the very front of his dress shirt. But he's superior to most of the rest of Drummond put together, because he's simple and honest. He runs a miniature farm on the edge of town and he loves to help the hired man with the cows and the horse and the chickens. He comes to banquets and board meetings reeking of the stable. When people laugh at him for clinging to his old country ways, his bright mischievous little eyes answer with a kind of defiant pride in his grotesque individuality. I tell you his laundry-marked dress shirt is a badge of distinction. He ought to wear it with pride in a place like Drummond where everyone else is some kind of fake. . . . Fake leader . . . fake philanthropist . . . fake gentleman . . . fake friend."

The bitterness of his outburst startled her. But he was like that sometimes: deeply hurt and angry when there had been difficulties at the office. She would not ask him about it now but wait for the enchanted moment that came to them so often just

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before sleep. She no longer minded David's nearness in the bed beside her. She needed it even. The love-making: that was for David to enjoy in the strange, wild way that he seemed to enjoy it. Surrender of her privacy, which had once seemed such a grotesque obligation, was now only a curious prelude to the closeness and the confiding that came afterward.

When they were ready for sleep, she would ask David what was troubling him. Probably he had lost money at poker again. Ben Stanford would not let him alone. It wasn't fair, when David wanted so much to have an orderly way of life. Surely he had all the gaiety he needed! There were big dinner parties three or four times a month: great Roman banquets with a different wine for every course. Faith had sometimes been tempted to try the wines. But she didn't, of course, remembering Papa.

The Simpsons and the Flemings envied Faith the fullness of her new life. Margaret was struck dumb with awe when she looked through Faith's engagement book. And Kathie! A look of shameless envy crossed her face whenever a party at the Langhorns or the Greenoughs was mentioned. It was pitiful the way she hated everything about her own existence. She scolded constantly about her mother-in-law and about the dull routine of her isolation in Chippewa. Faith wondered if Kathie did not even hate Lovatt. He wasn't quite exclusively his wife's slave any longer. His mother had given him money for the nursery, and he struggled constantly to master the details of a business for which he was obviously unfitted. He worked with a kind of idiotic concentration. David described it as Lovatt's "happy delirium." But everyone waited fatalistically for him to fail. Kathie had a problem on her hands.

The contrasting contentment and confidence of her own life had made her appreciate David more every day. She put an arm about his neck, prepared to enjoy one last minute of intimacy before she got back to work.

"Darling, it's wicked to stay here. I ought to be getting your dinner."

"Don't go, Faith. I think I'm too tired to eat . . . I am so tired."

HIGH-NOON

It was unlike David to parade a weakness. Usually he did not even know when he was tired. So many things that he had said tonight were strange. "David gives and David takes away." Beneath the banter there had been a current of bitterness. Why hadn't she understood before? Something was seriously the matter.

She rose before he could protest again, crossed the room quickly and lit the gas. David stood up blinking in the sudden glare. But she saw with an awful certainty that she had been right. Something was critically wrong. He looked old. There were dark rings under his eyes like the ones she had noticed on those two terrible times when he had come home with liquor on his breath. But that was not the trouble now. He had not been drinking.

"David!" she cried out in startled recognition, as though she were actually seeing him for the first time this evening. "What is the matter?"

"Matter? Why nothing's the matter, darling."

Why would he try to go on with his bantering, loquacious deception? It was a failure. He could not keep his anxiety from her any longer. She ran to him.

"David, don't put me off any longer. Please. . . ."

He sighed deeply as he took her in his arms. "You made it hard for me to tell you, Faith, because you seemed so happy . . . liking your life, your security . . . and now it's all been taken from us. . . ."

What was it he had said? "David gives and David takes away." He had meant something by that. She waited.

"You see, darling, Senator Hawkins has had his revenge on us, after all. He couldn't take it openly. But he's hated me ever since the Trust Company fight. He's sold the Argus out. Rather, he persuaded the board to sell it. He told me so himself. The Record has bought the Argus. They're going to suspend publication and keep the field to themselves."

"The Record!" But no one had ever taken the Record seriously. It was a kind of crude burlesque of a newspaper, without an editorial policy, depending for its appeal on all kinds of sensational features. To have no paper but the Record was like asking the whole city of Drummond to live on a diet of cheap candy.

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"The members of the board will all be rich out of the sale. It doesn't matter a damn to them that they're throwing a hundred men out of work."

The personal aspect of the tragedy had at first been swallowed up in the enormous sin of letting the Argus die. Now she saw what it meant to them.

"David! Your work . . . my work!"

He caught at her hand and held it tight. "Don't worry. I'll find something. I have friends."

Oh friends! He didn't really count on them. Fake friends! he had said.

"Surely, they'll make a place for you on the Record. They need you, David."

"Darling, I couldn't take another man's job even if I could get it."

Suddenly the thought of all the pleasure that she had had today seemed bitterly ironic. A good life; a busy, useful life! All kicked to pieces at one man's whim. All security gone; all hope of innocent satisfaction. They would be poor. There was no money anywhere. No more money to be given Mamma, either. There would be trouble over that. And the baby coming. . . . Ten minutes ago, no! not so long, she had been happy and confident. Now there was only fear. Fear, at the very thought of cooking dinner with food unpaid for. Fear, seeming to cling in almost tangible form, to the very walls of the flat with the rent just due.

"David, my darling!"

She pretended to offer comfort. But she knew that she was really seeking warmth from him, as fear swept up around her like an icy wind from the Wisconsin prairies.

X

(July, 1894)

FAITH lay in bed watching the monotonous procession of little grinning figures that always tormented her whenever she had a headache. They were like the Furies in the Greek plays taunting her with all the failures of her life—even the ones for which she was not accountable. That was what life was like. The Greeks were right. Malignant gods poked and prodded and forced you into mistakes and then blamed you for the results. When had she ever failed to work hard? From the time she was sixteen she had never known a minute not devoted to some kind of effort. And yet here she was living, practically on charity, as though she and David were down-and-outers like the vagrants in Bridge Square.

Another of those odious, convulsive pains seized her body. There was an awful indignity to the process of giving birth to a child. Perhaps that was all carefully arranged as a warning that you needn't think you would ever be allowed to live with dignity.

She reached out a hand toward Margaret in the darkened room.

"I had another," she said. "How long was that?"

"Too long. I'm afraid it isn't the real thing yet. You'll have to be patient."

Yes, be patient . . . be patient while you're sick and monstrous looking so that you aren't able to go outside your own door to try to earn a living. Be patient while your husband fumbles about trying to sell life insurance at fifteen dollars a week like a boy just out of college. Be patient when he comes home and tells funny stories that he has heard from the dear friends who do nothing to help him. Be patient when your husband allows himself to be impatient and goes out to get drunk with his bachelor friends. And not drunk even on his own money. Drunk on

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charity. That was the final humiliation. But David didn't see it. His old friends were still his dear old friends even when they denied him the right to earn a living and debauched him into the bargain.

The pain again, but one of the kind that didn't mean anything.

"Oh, Margaret, why did I have to have a baby now when everything is so difficult? Babies should be wanted. You hate them when they're just a cause of worry."

"Darling, you'll feel so differently when you have it in your arms."

Not about this baby, Faith reflected bitterly. It would be impossible ever to think of this disastrous moment with anything but alarm. Margaret was so full of insincere reassurances. Mrs. Veblen, too. It was wonderful to have friends. They managed with delicate tact to make life a great deal harder than it already was. Oh, it wasn't that they didn't try. The baskets of vegetables left anonymously at the doorstep: they were the perfect symbol of friendship. It must have been Mrs. Veblen who had done that. And Mr. Blum, in his magnificence, had arranged for a loan at his bank on his personal security, or whatever they called it.

She began to cry at the thought of her own petulant ingratitude. They did mean well. But that was the worst thing, the very worst, about being desperate. The black smear of humiliation was over everything. You could not see any act as good and generous because the very generosity reminded you of the fact that once you had not needed help from anyone. All her troubles and David's were related to a crisis so large and general that no one could be held accountable unless you were willing to say that Senator Hawkins had no right to sell his property. She could not say that. It was his right, of course. But that did not make the bitter bread of poverty any sweeter on her tongue.

If only she could die having this baby! Life was too much for her. She tried and she failed and she did not know why. If she tried again, she would only fail again for the same obscure reason. All these weeks since the disaster had fallen upon them, she had been haunted by that word: Why? Why? Why? And now

she was too tired even to care. It would be so restful just to be dead.

But there would be the baby to start things all over again. She was torn between the desire to be through with all suffering and the fear that she might leave a human creature as hapless as herself to face a career as ruinous as her own had been.

"Margaret, if I should die . . ." she began and faltered.

"Faith, every woman, having her first baby, thinks she's going to die. Porter told me that when I was having Eunice. You just put that out of your mind."

"Women have died." She realized that her voice sounded almost humorously petty. "But there's something I want to say quite seriously. If I die you must take the baby and bring it up with yours. David would be helpless. And I don't want anything that belongs to me ever to be in Kathie's hands."

It was the first time that she had ever put her dislike of Kathie into words. She was frightened somehow at the acknowledgment of the secret she had tried for so long to keep even from herself. It was clear that the admission had antagonized Margaret.

"Faith," she said primly, "I don't think that's a very nice attitude to take. Especially when Kathie's in trouble, too. You know that Lovatt has lost the nursery. \$25,000 gone! That's a third of his principal. And he'll never get another cent from his mother. She's made over all the rest to that sister."

Faith smiled to herself in the protection of the darkened room. Margaret loved mentioning the impressive figure. She got a queer sort of vicarious satisfaction out of the thought of anyone's having so much and still having more to lose. People's minds got so mixed up. Margaret and her husband were managing precariously to stay on the safe side of solvency. And yet she had sympathy to spare for Kathie's magnificent misfortunes. That was family loyalty for you!

Families! You could get a lot of sport out of thinking about families. Kathie was so humorously afraid of being asked to help that she stayed down there in Chippewa and wouldn't come up even to see Mamma. And every time that Mamma dropped in for a cheering little chat she described in detail what a frightful

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time she and Porter and Margaret and the baby were having to get on, now that Faith was no longer able to contribute to their income. She asked Faith very solemnly to remember that there were other people in trouble beside herself.

Margaret's cool hand was laid on her forehead, smoothing the hair away.

"Darling, if it will do you any good to have me say that I'll take the baby, of course I'll say it. I'd love it like one of my own. But everything's going to be fine. Really it is. If you only won't worry any more. You can't make me believe that things will go on like this for David very long. He's so clever and everyone likes him so much. Something will happen."

It was impossible now to keep from crying openly. To think that it should have been Margaret to express faith in David, and affection for him, rather than herself! David had been good: doing work he hated, work for which he had no aptitude. And with her he tried always to be amusing; tried to interest her in the things that had interested her so much before. There had been only that one time when he deserted her. Ben Stanford had been altogether responsible for his coming home intoxicated. She was sure of that. She could hear Mr. Stanford's unctuous voice assuring David that it would do him good to forget his troubles for one evening. Maybe it had been good for David to go out. But not to get drunk. To see David as she had seen that drunken man in Meadville: that was unbearable.

Still, she shouldn't have ranted at him. David was so shame-faced, like a great big child who'd been caught in mischief; without a word to say for himself. The very fact that he said nothing had somehow driven her on and on, to say so much more than she meant, in an effort to rouse some response in him. She had lost control, as she scolded, forgetting David, forgetting herself. The words she spoke seemed almost to come from someone else. She could fairly see herself, like an actress in the theater, making gestures and letting her voice rise higher and higher. And David all the while, sitting dumb and abashed before her.

It had been unfair for him to leave her alone that night when she was sick. But somehow it had been still more unfair for her

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to scold him. Why should she impose her ideals upon him and then flay him alive for betraying them? That was what she had done. Poor David! If she could only tell him that she had been wrong! But it was so difficult to express the exact nature of her wrongness. David mustn't think that she had become tolerant about drunkenness. She hated it, not because it was a sin; not that at all! But because it was shabby . . . something unworthy of a man with so fine a heart and head and spirit.

Liberty and morals and obligations and loyalties and generosity and ideals, all got so terribly mixed up. None of them ever stayed in its proper, appointed place. Or maybe there simply wasn't an appointed place. Maybe it was better for them to tread on each other's heels and tumble into a heap and pick themselves up and laugh and go on living together. That was David's philosophy and it had more charm than her own stern, Puritanical attitude toward life.

A couplet that David was forever reciting from the Rubaiyat came into her head:

"One flash within the tavern caught
Better than in the temple lost outright."

She saw, for the first time, what it really meant. Maybe during this terrible time of trouble David had been keeping himself warm in the tavern with whisky and wit while she was letting herself get chilled in the temple hugging the harsh symbols of virtue. She wondered if David felt that that was so. Had he quoted the lines to her as a warning? But she could not believe that. It was not his way to be subtle and indirect. Probably he quoted them to reassure himself. Poor David!

It was bad luck for him that he had no one to help him think well of himself. He deserved that much in return for his own generosity. It was a traditional joke at the Argus office that whenever a drunken reporter returned from a spree, David had made him feel merely that he had been badly missed. "Why, Frank, we can't get out a decent paper when you're not here. You know

that." The implied praise had always worked better than an hour's tongue-lashing.

Yet it was only tongue-lashing that David got from her. Severity in return for tolerance! She knew that every day was a round of humiliations to him. She knew how he must long to escape from his fears. But all she could do was to name his faults over and over, as though she hated him. It was cruel of her, relentlessly cruel.

If she went on torturing herself like this, she would go insane. Somehow she must stop this endless flagellation. First she whipped David and then she whipped herself. She could not bear another minute of it.

"Margaret, talk to me. . . . Tell me something that will take my attention."

"Darling, I've given you all the news. I read you Buford's letter about going to California next year. His mother is to be there with him. He chose the job at Leland Stanford because he thought it would be nice for his mother at Palo Alto. Porter says Mrs. Waldron should never try to travel alone any more. A woman of her age who has once had a heart attack must be careful for the rest of her life."

Faith thought of Buford and the gentle progress of his life. He and his mother had always been together. First it had been her responsibility to care for him, to educate him, to find for him the best of everything in the realm of thought and taste. And now the rôles were reversed. He would care for her as long as she lived. If this child of hers should be a boy, she would try to do as Mrs. Waldron had done. Everything must be done to lift him slowly and steadily into a secure place in the world of learning. All that she had failed to find for herself, her son must have. If Mrs. Waldron could do it by writing those tiresome stories, Faith could find some way. Like Mrs. Waldron, she would be fulfilled through her son.

"And did we show you the announcement about John Haddon?" Margaret was going on. "The newspaper came just yesterday, addressed to Mamma. John had scribbled a note on it asking that the word be passed on to all the members of the family."

"No. What was it?" Probably John had had some new honors, some new appointment. His career would be like Buford's: one of steady advances. There was no insecurity in his world. The earth would never open before him and tumble him to the bottom to begin all over again, struggling up like Sisyphus. She and David were doomed to share that rôle between them, pushing the black rock up the hill and seeing it tumble back each time that they seemed about to reach the top. Then a more dismal interpretation occurred to him. She was Sisyphus and David was her black rock, difficult to push and tug, perilously likely to slip from her grasp and slip down once more.

"John's going to be married."

"Oh!"

She tried to make her voice sound casual. The darkness of the room had protected her from Margaret's eyes. She was grateful that there would be no need to lie and pretend that the sudden clasping of her hands had been caused by the pain in her body.

"Yes. She's a Buffalo girl. We never knew her. Apparently they're very prominent people. There was a story almost a column long about the family in the Buffalo Times."

"I suppose he met her at Cornell."

"I don't think so. There was a lot about the charities she's interested in, but I don't remember anything about college."

"It's fine that he's going to be married."

But somehow she could not make herself feel really glad. Now, at last, John was quite lost to her. There was only one bit of comfort in the news. He was not marrying an intellectual woman. Perhaps, there would still be a place in his memory for herself.

Then, with a kind of violent shame, she repudiated the idea of clinging even to a place in his memory. She had pretended to say good-bye to him many times. When she left Meadville! When she had talked to David about John's plan of visiting Drummond! But always she had been holding to him fast, at the very moment when she seemed to be relinquishing him.

But this was a real farewell. He belonged to another woman. It was his choice. She had no claim even upon his imagination. Why should she want to force such a claim? John's caution; his

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clear view of the immediate necessity; his slowness to perceive anything beyond the actuality that stared him in the face: all these characteristics had helped to separate them. The separation was now complete.

She wanted David near her. He was her life from now on. His physical presence, the feeling of his hand in hers would make the actual once more dear and desirable.

"David!" she called aloud.

Margaret leaned over her solicitously. "Darling, did you have a pain? Was it a big one?"

"I don't know. But I want David."

"Don't worry, dear. The doctor said he would look in again at nine o'clock and it's almost that now. You'll be all right."

"Is it nine? David said he'd be home from his insurance class by nine."

"He'll come."

Then suddenly she had a pain that was as different from the others as chaos is different from disorder. She felt first a great disbelief. Such things surely could not happen to people. Birth could not be like that. But when the great pain was followed by another that seemed to grind her body under the weight of the universe, panic obliterated all other feeling.

"David!" she called again. "Where's David!"

"Darling, don't get excited. It's perfectly natural. The doctor will be here, soon."

XI

(January, 1895)

"YOU'LL have no reason to regret making this arrangement," T. K. Farnum was saying.

He had a way of rolling from side to side in his great thick-padded chair so that he seemed actually to be in the midst of a headlong plunge. The effect was one of over-bearing self-confidence. He's the only man I know, Dave thought, who can strut sitting down.

But T. K. had chosen his rôle of majestic benignity. He was playing it like a blend of Falstaff, Cræsus and Jesus Christ.

"I don't mind telling you that you'll be the highest paid man on my pay-roll. I know you'll be worth it. Your full page feature will be played up with cartoons by Toby. We're going to use color. That will get you a lot of attention. You'll have a chance to capitalize on the kind of stuff you've been giving away to the lunch clubs and banquet organizations all these years. We expect you to be a circulation builder."

He makes me sound like a goddamn patent machine, Dave thought. But I've been bad medicine to myself long enough. I ought to be grateful.

He was grateful, though he wished T. K. might have tact enough not to refer to his pay-roll and talk as though he were scattering largesse with a lavish hand. Five years ago this man had been an obscure financial editor on the old Argus. He had followed a tip that came to him in the course of his work and made a fortune overnight. Now he was the owner of the Record and the murderer of the Argus. He had a great house on Crescent Parkway. He collected snuff-boxes and old firearms. He had become a dandy in his dress and an extravagant host at dinner parties given for people who had not been aware of his existence until a moment's shrewdness had done him over, all in gold.

While Dave himself had walked the same little course, day after day, and finally discovered that the line of march ended in a black hole about as cozy as the grave, T.K., who had once been his employé—a solemn one who could never see the point of a joke—, had become a great man. And to this man he must now genuflect as to a superior being; accept his money; be grateful for it.

“Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed That he is grown so great,” David reflected. But the thought was sobering. Such petty jealousy belonged to a lean and hungry Cassius: to someone who had half starved in body, and wholly starved in mind, for a whole year and more.

He mustn’t let his hard luck sour him. As though to assure himself that he was still capable of good-will he laughed aloud.

“All right, T.K., we’ll make the circulation go up like high blood pressure. I’ll try to put a girdle round the earth with my Puckish wit.”

But he saw that the high spirits had been a little overdone. T.K. wanted all the buoyancy for himself. He made no acknowledgment of the pleasantry, but drew his brows together as though he were troubled.

“There’s just one thing, Dave.” He stopped rolling in his chair and leaned across his desk with an air of stern decorum. “I’m saying this to you for your own good and not to hurt your feelings. If you want to work here, you’ll have to cut out booze-fighting.”

Dave felt his color rising. In fifteen years of newspaper work, he had never lost a day through dissipation. No one who knew him well could pretend that he had. His efficiency as a managing editor had never been impaired. That record ought to be allowed to speak for itself. A man of decent sensibility would not think that he had a right to look behind it. Only a bully like this man would be capable of it. T.K. liked to make the men who worked for him feel inferior.

But as he met the other man’s eyes, Dave saw that T.K. was not merely playing the rôle of the bully. He was hinting at the old scandal of Ben Stanford’s last party. Every man who had been present that night would live forever under suspicion. Well, there

was a crude justice in that. It had been a damn drunken brawl and it had ended tragically. The dark memory of it had shadowed his own thoughts for months. It was no wonder that T.K. should be thinking of it now.

Poor old Ben! In the midst of telling a funny story, he had been hit over the head by a crazy, jealous actor. Suddenly all the fun was over. He had lived for gaiety and, in a grotesque, sordid way, died for it, too.

It had never been definitely established how Ben had died. Everyone agreed that the slight concussion was not enough to account for his death. It was much more likely to have been heart-failure. Still there was doubt enough so that, in the mind of a Puritan like T.K., every man who had attended the party became an undisciplined ruffian, a potential murderer.

The prominent guests like Langhorne had seen to it that the actor was white-washed. No one wanted an investigation at which he would be called on to testify. But every guest at the party had been warned by Langhorne to keep a bag packed "for a quick skip in case some high-minded son-of-a-bitch got pious about it."

It had seemed tragic to Dave that Ben Stanford who had organized so many lively parties for these men should have become, simply through the tragic accident of his death, the enemy of them all. While he lived, there was only the most extravagant praise of his princely hospitality. He had not been dead ten minutes before they had all accepted the view that he was the town's evil genius: a man who led the blameless into uncongenial mischief. That was to be his immortality. As the essence of evil, his memory would be both deathless and odious.

Yet his character was the same after he had compromised them as before. Dave had watched the first skirmish in Ben's quarrel with the drunken actor. It was over a soubrette in the *Fireman, Save My Child* troupe. She had seemed like many other girls from musical shows to whom Ben had been charming and generous. It was just rotten luck that a vain, swaggering tenor happened to take his own relations with the same soubrette very seriously. The damn pup should never have gone to the party in

the first place if he was jealous of Ben. Poor Stanford had paid for the party as usual . . . only the price was bigger.

The others were not willing to let it go at that. Each guest industriously white-washed the other, saying that friendship with Ben Stanford had been merely a graceful condescension. The price of loyalty to Ben would have been to make oneself a candidate for lone martyrdom. Dave had kept a bag packed, like the rest.

He hated his hypocrisy which, if it was not active and virulent like that of Langhorne, was passive and demoralizing. But there had been no chance to do Ben justice. For Dave, the impulse had been swallowed up by awareness of the enormous injustice he had done Faith. It was while she was bearing her child with such difficulty that he had been participating in the drama of Ben's death. He had not known that the baby would be born that day. He had tried to find some comfort in that fact. But it did not really save his self-esteem. Faith had called for him and he had not been there. And afterwards, when she wanted affection, he had been distracted by the fear that she might learn the whole story. A sense of guilt had made him seem indifferent to her and to the child. She had said so many times.

All these memories T.K. lightly raked up and tossed, with an air of disciplinary zeal, in his face. He could not know, of course, the full extent of their bitterness. Thank God, neither T.K. nor anyone else would ever know how cruelly Faith had been wounded by these months of insecurity. It must be the work of all the rest of his life to try to heal her. The lines of anxiety that had appeared in her face could probably never be erased. But he must do what he could.

The hurt to her pride went very deep. When she was hardly more than a child, she had put on the armor of independence and worn it valiantly. The very first thing that had attracted him to her had been the look of determination that lay under the transparent surface of her timidity. He had loved her for her independence and robbed her of it. Through him, she had been reduced, for the first time, to a condition of utter helplessness. She could not rise and fight, with all the burdens that he had put upon her. That was fine work for a lover! He could not complain

that any rebuke was undeserved. Even when T.K. pompously assumed the congenial rôle of retributive justice, it was not unfair.

There was nothing for it but to be bluff and hearty about this humiliation.

"I've been on the wagon, T.K., ever since . . ." He hesitated, not willing to give T.K. the satisfaction of knowing that his reformation dated from the night of Ben Stanford's party. A sentimental inspiration came to him. He tried to repudiate it, but the effort left him dumb, seeming more submissive than he was willing to appear. Oh well, he thought, might as well go the whole way in this tender moment of confession. "Ever since my little girl was born," he continued.

T.K. drew back in his chair and started rolling again.

"Glad to hear it . . . glad to hear it . . . nothing like family responsibility to make a man settle down, even if it does come a bit belatedly."

He could resist no temptation to make a man feel like a bad boy being given another chance. Yet that, Dave decided, was precisely his situation. If only Faith, in deep and secret places of her mind, would decide that he was worthy once more of her trust, it was all that he asked. Fate, with her usual lack of tact, had chosen the most unpleasant possible way of reinstating him. T.K. might have been chosen by a spiteful deity to be the agent of his restoration to good standing before the world. He mustn't think of that. Spite or no spite, the restoration was what he wanted. If there were only himself to think of, he might indulge in the humorous satisfaction of pushing T.K.'s no doubt frightfully expensive teeth down his throat. But he had not earned the right to indulge in extravagant gestures. Gratitude was more becoming to a man in his position.

It was an enormous relief to have this good news to carry home to Faith. Perhaps now, she would be able to take a normal interest in her life. Fear had been goading her so long that she had lost her ability to respond to any other kind of stimulation. It worried him to see her with the baby. She went through the routine of her duties with exactly the kind of conscientiousness that was to be expected of her. But obviously there was no pleasure for her

in any of the services that she had taught herself to perform so expertly. She read her books and absorbed her theories with a sort of frenzied preoccupation, as though she wished to demonstrate to herself that there was no time for the simple expression of affection.

Once Effie, in her naïve exuberance, had tried to offer a warning. Her eyes streaming with tears she told the story of a woman who had taken her child to a doctor and rehearsed the day's routine in a cold monotonous voice. "Am I doing the right things, Doctor?" she had finally asked. "Is there anything more that I can do?" As she had reached the climax of her story Effie had hardly been able to continue. Through gulps and violent efforts to recover control she had finally got out the Doctor's answer: "Yes, Madam. In between time, you might love him a little."

But Faith had seemed not to hear. A moment later she was back with the child again, caring for her needs with the same air of resolute detachment.

The poor little Nina had been born at a moment when her arrival could be nothing but an intrusion. There was no good to be gained by discussing all this with Faith. She was unaware of what she was doing. To be accused of being indifferent to her child would have seemed to her like a cruel injustice, and of injustices she had had as many as she could bear. The only hope was that, with the conditions of her life easier, she would be once more all that she was capable of being. And when the tension of the household was gone, the baby herself might be better. She was a frail and fretful little thing, seeming to echo, in each of her piercing cries, Faith's own protest against the cruelty of existence.

If he could only find some work for Faith! The burden of her complaint had been that she was left with no opportunity to justify her life but must wait to be served by someone else. If Faith could be made to feel that she was earning her share of the livelihood, that sense of independence which she valued so highly might be coaxed back.

"T.K., I've just had an idea," Dave said suddenly. "You know, my wife and I have always worked together. Couldn't you find some work for her as well as for me?"

A look that was clearly intended to be forbidding crossed the other man's face. "I've never gone in for hiring editorial writers in troupes, Dave."

"And that's not what you are doing now."

The idea of finding work for Faith had come, all in an instant, to seem like redemption, like salvation. It had to be realized at any sacrifice. No fat-assed T. K. Farnum should stand between him and its realization.

"My wife is a highly trained newspaper writer," he went on. "To get her back into the field I'm willing to give up something. Slice a little off what you're willing to pay me and give it back as salary for my wife. Let her run a weekly page of editorials and features for women. In the old days she had a great deal to do with getting the city playgrounds movement started. I know you'd find her damned useful."

T.K.'s interest had been caught by the prospect of getting something for nothing. His whole manner changed. "You don't have to tell me, Dave. I've always considered Mrs. Fraser a mighty bright little woman."

One more crack like that and you'll lose the diamond-studded teeth, after all, Dave thought. But he held tight to his composure and played the comedy to the end.

"I'm making this offer only because it's important for a writer to keep his hand in. My wife has the baby to care for and she can't be tied to a full-time job. But this would be something to whittle at, until she can really get back to work. A year from now you'll want her at her own price."

A resounding smack upon the surface of T.K.'s desk startled the secretary who sat just beyond the glass partition. She looked up evidently expecting to spy on a scene. But T.K. was smiling broadly.

"I'm prepared to be generous, Dave, because I know all the trouble you've been through. I'll give you the salary we agreed on and your wife's, too: Fifteen a week for her, beside your fifty."

Dave rose. "So much the better. We'll both check in on Monday."

Outside the door, he kicked at the carpet as he walked. Couldn't

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even let me have my little gesture! he thought. Had to steal that, too. The great collector is now making a hobby of sacrificial souvenirs.

Then his mind cleared. T.K.! what was he? A means to an end. There was good news at last to take home to Faith. He'd tell her what T.K. had said and assure her that what he really wanted was her editorials. No, he'd be damned if he would repeat the phrase about a "mighty bright little woman." "The most intellectual woman in the Northwest!" That sounded better.

Thank God he had good news for Faith.

XII

(July, 1896)

FAITH climbed the stairs, three at a time, to see what was making the baby cry. She had gone down only for a moment to get the mail, leaving Nina with Mamma. But before she could put the key in the box, the furious screams which were the accompaniment of most of her life began again.

As she entered the nursery, the baby lay still in one of those livid intervals when fury became too intense, too high-pitched, for utterance. The little body was curled up into a red mass of protest. Then the scream broke loose once more with the concentrated power of a Wagnerian climax.

Mamma stood above the crib looking on with disapproving detachment.

"No child of mine ever cried so much from colic," she said with an air of accusation as though Nina and Faith, between them, had deliberately planned this monstrous perversion of a baby's fretfulness.

"Did you see if there is a pin sticking into her?"

Mamma shrugged her shoulders and stepped aside. Faith picked up the baby. Immediately the fists struck out wildly, beating in frantic abandonment. In the dreary calm of resignation, Faith began pacing the room, back and forth.

As she passed the window, she heard the woman in the flat upstairs exclaim in extremity of exasperation. "Well, really . . ." There was the sound of a window clattering down.

"Mamma, would you mind closing our window? We haven't a right to disturb the neighbors."

The stale, suffocating July air seemed to close in about them the minute the window was down. Faith felt as though the baby's indignation had been resolved into a new element. In this stifling

room she drew it in with every breath. Her own patience died in its unhealthy atmosphere.

"Let's talk and try to forget this, Mamma."

"Was there any news from Meadville," Mamma called out above the tumult.

"I didn't stop for the mail. I couldn't leave you alone with Nina."

"Oh, well, they've forgotten us. Perhaps, it's all for the best. They would never recognize us if they saw the way Margaret and I have to live. Porter's trouble is getting worse. . . ." Mamma always spoke of Poe Simpson's dissipation as his "trouble." She couldn't be honest even with herself. The habit of being devious was so fixed upon her that she couldn't use direct words even when they would serve her malice better.

"Does he still spend most of his evenings with the firemen across the street?"

A hated image of Poe Simpson trapped Mamma into bluntness.

"Faith, when I see him with his chair tipped back against the wall of the station, I'm so ashamed for Margaret. He treats those men as though they were his equals. And the worst of it is, I think they are. I often say to myself: What would Papa think!"

It was a little late to be wondering what Papa would think. Mamma and Margaret and Kathie had never seemed to care much about that. Not until their snobbery was affected. After all, what did it matter whom Poe Simpson chose as his friends? It was the monstrous fact of what he was that should concern them.

"Lovatt's just as bad," Mamma was going on. "He has a new obsession. He's invented a shoe-shining box with a place inside for brushes and polish. This time he's sure he's going to make his fortune. Even Kathie has got excited about it. She's going to decorate special models with her wood-burning set. Lovatt has contracted for the manufacture of heaven knows how many and he's planning to sell them himself from town to town. Madame Fleming is furious with him. She blames Kathie and won't even see her. Lovatt's had to take a miserable little furnished house of his own. It's all very hard now that Kathie's in the family

way again. I can't tell you how grieved Mamma is over all the sadness that has come into the lives of her girls."

Poor Mamma! She had reason to be grieved. Saying so was no longer merely a formula with her by which she meant to get her own way. And yet she had managed to remain beautiful. There was even a kind of serenity in her face. Perhaps, that was because she still got her way in little things. It was enough to preserve the impression of ruling her world.

At least Mamma need not bother to be grieved over David. He was busy again; more triumphantly successful with audiences than he had ever been. His speech for the Commercial Club was good stuff. It needed pruning, of course. She would get at it just as soon as the baby was quiet and she could persuade Mamma to go. David's witty imagination flowered with the exuberance of land that has lain fallow a long time. During the whole period when he had been idle nothing could induce him to write. He seemed to hate words. Faith had come on the manuscript of his unfinished play, torn through the middle and thrown into the grate. She had carefully pasted it together though she was sure that he would never touch it again. That was because it reminded him of Ben Stanford. But his mind was recklessly productive once more. She exulted in the knowledge that he was happy.

"That child's asleep," Mamma observed. "Why don't you put her down?"

"If I try to, she'll wake up and punish us harder than ever."

"You spoil her, Faith. She'll turn out to be a difficult child."

Faith smiled to herself. Did Mamma imagine that she wasn't difficult already? It wasn't exactly easy to write editorials and edit David's stuff with this screaming forever in her ears. But it was easier to be patient than not to be. If only she could protect herself against the grim resentment that was growing in her because the baby exacted such a terrible tribute in time and energy.

She looked down at the passive form in her arms. The pathetic helplessness of this strange, small alien touched her. It was difficult to believe that she herself had ever been inarticulately defiant

like Nina. Her memory did not reach back to a time when she had not been able to soothe her own distress by putting it into words. She had been so dependent on language that the lack of it in this wilful and determined little creature baffled her completely. Her fingers moved along the thigh and calf, down to the toes. Fleeting and tantalizingly, she became aware of the subtle communication that flesh may make with flesh. She wanted her hands to make the baby feel security and comfort and trust.

But trust was precisely what Nina indignantly refused to feel. The cessation of movement had waked her and with a long-drawn breath she began once more to pour a torrent of general indignation out of her narrow throat.

"My goodness, Faith, I don't see how you endure it. If she were my own child I should certainly have to break her spirit."

Mamma had risen and was shaking out her skirts. Her little black bonnet, with violets dipping over the brim, lay on the couch beside her. She picked it up and began to tie the long ribbons under her chin.

"Let the baby cry it out. It will be good for her."

Faith laid Nina in the bassinet, conscious of a closer union with her child than she had felt for days. Mamma offered very strange advice. She had not been so triumphantly successful in breaking her own children's spirit. And why should spirits be broken anyway! Faith herself had seen enough of that to last out a lifetime. As she walked with Mamma toward the door, she took something almost like satisfaction in Nina's uncowed defiance.

At the outside door, Mamma lingered over her good-byes. For a moment Faith did not remember what it was that remained to be done. Then she said with a start:

"Oh, you mustn't go without your check."

Mamma did not answer, but waited while Faith crossed the room and opened the drawer of her desk. She thought of Buford as she sat down before his wedding present, a lovely Sheraton piece sent all the way from Oxford. On its surface David's speech was spread out, waiting for the blue pencil. All that was best

in Faith's life seemed to be associated with this desk: the intimacy of a childhood friendship, her own work, her love for David.

"Isn't it a nice desk, Mamma?" she said to cover the slight embarrassment that she always felt in this weekly transaction.

"Yes," Mamma agreed with the air of one studying a problem closely. "But I've never liked it tucked in that corner. For your work I should think you'd need a larger one that you could put in your bedroom. If you should ever want to get rid of Buford's desk, I think it would help to make poor Kathie's living room look a little less dreary."

"Oh, I'm used to this desk. I think I'll keep it."

Mamma opened her reticule and put the check inside. She had the patient manner of one who feels that there's no harm in trying to do a good deed, even if it isn't appreciated.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said. "I'm glad you and David are so comfortable again. I always say about you, Faith, that you're adaptable like me. I only wish Margaret and Kathie could be more so. Kathie is always so bitter about Madame Fleming and Margaret grieves me by siding with Porter whenever there's a disagreement about disciplining Eunice. You don't know how fortunate you are."

It was strange to hear Mamma criticizing her favorites. It was the penalty they paid for being favorites. Faith herself had always stood outside of the charmed circle of Mamma's loyalties and now she discovered that there were advantages in her isolated position. She could even deny Mamma's requests without feeling guilty. The link between them had fallen slack, and they were able to treat each other with the polite deference of mere acquaintances.

When Mamma was gone she returned to her work on David's speech. The baby had stopped crying and fallen asleep. She could get in an hour's work before David came home.

And the speech needed a lot of work. It was strange that after many years' experience, Dave should be so little of a craftsman and that after so many years of being a comedian he had learned so little about the technique of the epigram. He depended upon the never failing resourcefulness of his invention, and also upon

his droll talents as an actor, to make his points. Pure form meant little to him. He would invent a delicious joke and then, instead of leaving it alone in sharp outline, he would throw out flying buttresses to support the point and laboriously place props to support the flying buttresses. He did not understand the strength of his own wit. It was her function to cart away the useless lumber.

The thought of David got between her and her work. His failure to understand his strength was the fatal flaw of his character. There was constantly before his mind the image of himself as a weak man, a trivial man, a man good for nothing but to amuse people. That was why he was not, as Mamma said, adaptable. He could have learned to be an insurance salesman if he had been willing to try. He could learn by heart any jargon that was set him to learn. He could have adorned it with any amount of engaging wit. He could have clinched his arguments by a display of his personal charm. It was not really personal integrity and hatred of the work that had kept him from making an art of a tedious job. He had failed because he preferred to fail. He liked himself as the weak man, fitted for only one kind of work. David took a perverse satisfaction in his inadequacy and he made of it an excuse for leaving his job to go and drink at the Commercial Club. He found a demoralizing comfort, almost like that of a drug, in the thought of his weakness.

She must never again permit him to feel that he lacked in moral strength. When she scolded him he was often completely silent and submissive. It was almost as though he enjoyed seeing her paint new frailties into the portrait of the weakling that he secretly treasured. By emphasizing his inadequacy she provided him with an excuse for continuing to be inadequate. She must avoid the temptation to rebuke him; she must insist always on his being strong.

Ever since the jobs at the Record office had come to them, David had worked hard. The familiar routine had restored his confidence and his pride. It was on his pride that she must play if she wanted to help him. . . . No more scoldings . . . ever.

The doorbell rang and Faith ran to answer it before the noise should wake the baby. As she crossed the room she whispered

once more the words that she had used so often to try to exorcise Nina's wildness: "Rest, rest, perturbed spirit."

Donald Perry stood in the hall. He had come for her Sunday copy. Faith put out her hand to him, abstractedly listening for the baby's cries. But Nina was still quiet.

"I'm all ready, Donald."

The young man crossed the threshold with a kind of shambling swagger. He twisted his hat about in his hands, waiting for Faith to make her usual offer of hospitality.

"Have you time for a glass of iced-tea?"

"I'd like to stay," he said, tossing his hat toward the bench in the hall. It slipped to the floor, but Donald left it there, just as he had always let his cap fall from the hook in the Argus office. Faith wondered idly how many times she had picked it up and put it back for him.

"I'll get the tea," she called back to him as she went into the kitchen. "I hope you've brought a new poem to read to me."

He followed her down the corridor and stood lounging over the top of the stove, chin propped up on his palms.

"No, I'm through with poetry. I write such rotten stuff."

"Donald! You mustn't say that. You know I think it's good."

"You're too generous. Dave tells me the awful truth. Did he ever tell you about the first time I ever met him? I had walked all the way from Somerset to sell him my priceless sonnets. He read them all through very patiently and I thought he was impressed. I even had the impertinence to ask him what he'd give me for them. Do you know what he said . . . 'Young man, I'll give you a ten yard start,' he said."

Donald laughed delightedly.

"That was giving me all the best of it, too. I deserved to have my head pushed in without any formality . . . taking up his time that way."

It was curious, Faith thought as she studied Donald Perry's amused, unhappy eyes, how young he seemed to her. When she had first gone to work on the Argus, he had appeared like a man among the rest, except for that boyish trick of letting his cap fall on the floor. But she had become a woman during the

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past year. For Donald, time had stood still. He had even the lost expression of unbelieving shrewdness that he had copied from Frank Judson. It was as though a mask had slipped a little from his face and she could see a perplexed child peering out cautiously behind it. Faith felt sorry for him. He needed help badly.

"Will you take the tea tray back to the living room, Donald? And be very quiet when you pass the baby's room."

"Yes, ma'am."

When they were seated by the open window, she took up the theme of his self-doubt.

"You mustn't allow yourself to get discouraged. It isn't fair to me. I've believed in you such a long time. When your first book comes out I shall boast that I had a share in your career. And so does David believe in you, really. . . ."

"Oh, Dave!" Donald exclaimed.

He sat up eagerly in his chair all the forlornness and self-pity gone from his voice.

"I get something more than praise for my poetry from Dave. I don't know where I'd be today if it weren't for him. Dead, I think. When the Argus closed and I had to go back to the farm at Somerset, I thought about dying a lot. It wouldn't have been hard in those days. I felt like such a no-good. I never did help much on the farm and when I had to go back, it was like being a kid again—a kid that ran away from home and been brought back in disgrace. My father liked to rub it in that I'd never been any good and never would be. I suppose he didn't realize how down and out I was. It was pretty awful."

Faith's heart beat fast. What Donald said was like a rebuke especially intended for her. She had treated David like a child during those bad times, scolded him and told him he was no good. She was as bad as Donald's father. She had rubbed it in. Was David, too, thinking that it had been pretty awful?

"It was Dave that saved me. I think I might have popped into the river, if he hadn't managed to get me onto the Record. Down there in Somerset I used to think about the things Dave used to do for me. When I first worked on the Argus, I was about as green as they come. The telephone worried me. I didn't know

how to use it. Dave used to take my calls for me, pretending he thought they were for him. But it was just to save my face. Then he saved me from Somerset, the first chance he got. I think he knew I was rotting down there and wishing I could die. I tell you there isn't anyone better than Dave Fraser."

It's true! her mind cried out in distress. Oh, don't let it have been pretty awful for David! Don't let him say that to himself!

For a moment her absorption shut away the image of Donald Perry's earnest face. When she saw him clearly again he was leaning toward her, speaking more excitedly than before.

"But the finest thing that Dave does for me is letting me come to see you. He knows that you give me the same kind of encouragement you give him. Seeing you is what keeps me going. When I leave here, I say to myself: In seven days I can come again. When I wake up the next morning, I say: Now it's only six days. And when the time comes to start up here, I can hardly keep myself from running all the way to your door. It's true. You can laugh. But every word of it is true."

She felt no impulse to laugh. It frightened her to realize that the casual words of praise she had given Donald Perry had become so necessary to him. He exposed a terrible hunger that she could not attempt to satisfy. What she gave him would not be enough for very long.

But what she gave to David: that had to satisfy him for a lifetime. She had not given him enough. This appalling need of appreciation could be fed so easily. Without even knowing that she had done so, she had fed Donald Perry. Yet there had been times when she had deliberately withheld from David the belief and the encouragement that she could squander on people who mattered to her hardly at all.

"I like to have you come here, Donald," she heard herself saying. "I hope you'll come as often as you like. You needn't wait until it's time to get my copy."

He had risen and was standing by the window.

"I don't think I'd dare to come oftener. . . . I have no right to depend on you too much. But at least I can tell you how I feel about your wonderful capacity for believing in people."

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"I do believe in you. I believe in you very much."

It was really to David that she spoke. She wanted her voice to reach him. It must reach him across any distance—even the distance that had separated them in these difficult times when he had been idle.

Donald was moving awkwardly across the room. Her old habit of cordiality roused itself. She must not let him go, realizing perhaps that she had been scarcely aware of him at all.

"Sit down a moment," she urged, filling his glass again. "Surely you're going to recite a new poem for me. I shall be disappointed if you don't. There is a new one, isn't there?"

He smiled with childish confusion.

"Yes, ma'am, there is . . . if you really want to hear it."

But she found that she could not follow the design of tortured needs that his poem attempted to reveal. Everyone had tortured needs. Everyone longed for a whole life and everyone saw his life slashed to pieces by fear. Still you had to go on believing doggedly in the possibility of a good life. If you had to renounce one set of beliefs, you must find another and another and another to the end of your days. That was all anyone could be expected to do.

It was a long poem that Donald had written this week. He was still reciting, in his low-pitched monotone, when Nina woke and began to cry again.

XIII

(March, 1898)

MRS. VEBLEN followed Faith into the hall. Frank Judson, pulling on his coat near the door, smiled with the all-embracing amiability of one who has just experienced a triumph.

"When you're the first lady of Drummond, Mrs. Fraser," he said, "you'll have to try to look less like a school girl about to pulverize a trigonometry problem."

"I tell her that she looks like Marcus Aurelius."

Mrs. Veblen's arm went about Faith's shoulders as she spoke. It was her habit to assume in public an attitude of protective intimacy which, in private, Faith could not persuade herself to encourage. She liked Mrs. Veblen. In the solution of practical problems, she drew largely on Mrs. Veblen's offer of affection. Yet in all these years of friendship there had been no nearer approach to endearment between them than Mrs. Veblen's addressing her as "Lady Fraser."

Frank Judson seemed to consider Mrs. Veblen's suggestion judicially. "I suppose that's it," he said at last; "Marcus Aurelius in a pinafore."

Faith felt her cheeks grow warm. Frank Judson was talking as he used to do sometimes in the old days at the Argus office when he had had a little too much to drink. David had been obliged to protect her from him more than once. But tonight he was feeling simply the intoxication of victory and he had to be forgiven. She offered her hand.

Frank grasped it eagerly.

"You've helped to put Dave in the Mayor's chair. I think you're chiefly responsible. After all, we had to give the public a good big dose of idealism to cure them of their sickness over the last administration. The speeches you wrote for Dave and Langhorne and me certainly fed it to them."

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As she drew away her hand, Faith glanced at Mrs. Veblen, wondering if she had caught the undertone of cynicism that there seemed always to be in Frank Judson's comments on the campaign. He talked as though its idealism were not sincere. Once he had praised a speech over which Faith had worked particularly hard, saying that it was "chock-full of the good old hokum." David had flushed with annoyance and afterward complained sharply of Frank's warped sense of humor.

Mrs. Veblen was at the door using her practiced art as a hostess to see that it closed firmly and finally upon Frank Judson.

"Come on back to the fire, Lady Fraser," she ordered. When they were seated, she turned abruptly toward Faith. "You don't wholly trust that man, do you?"

Then she was right, Faith thought. Mrs. Veblen had noticed Frank Judson's air of taking the whole campaign as a huge game that he had won because he and David had been more skilful than the members of the opposing team. But she could not admit to such a charge against David's campaign manager.

"He has always been a little impertinent," she said slowly as though she were merely soothing her own sensibilities. "But he knows local politics and he speaks effectively. He's been very useful to David."

"I suspect that he knows local politics a great deal too well. David Fraser will probably have to discipline him, once he actually gets into office. And as for Mr. Langhorne, there's only one thing to be done with him and that is drop a good-sized stone directly on his head."

"But Mr. Langhorne's been a big contributor to Dave's campaign funds."

Mrs. Veblen laughed deep in her throat. The sound was so pleasantly pitched that it almost defeated its own intention of being derisive.

"Yes, representing the better element! Will you tell me when the Langhornes became so pious about reform? They're a better element than vultures, perhaps; but not much better."

Even in the warmth of the hearth fire, Faith felt a chilling repugnance shake her body. She had feared Mr. Langhorne. But

she had denied her distrust even to herself because David had seemed to have such complete confidence in him. Now, suddenly, all pleasure in the thought that David would probably be elected was gone. The childish elation that she had felt when Frank Judson had come to tell her of the triumphant success, tonight, of David's final meeting was swallowed up in the appalling discovery that Mrs. Veblen had nothing but contempt for the man who had sponsored his candidacy.

She rose as though to get nearer to the reassuring warmth of the fire. But Mrs. Veblen drew her down once more to the sofa.

"Now, look here! You needn't be frightened. No one thinks David Fraser has any but the very highest motives."

Faith straightened her shoulders in the enclosing grip of Mrs. Veblen's arm. "Indeed, they'd better not."

"All right. They don't. He's immaculate. That's why Mr. Langhorne wanted him. The only thing for both of you to realize is that they'll make it as hard as possible for David to remain that way."

Yes, in the secret places of her mind, Faith realized, she had always known how hard it would be. She had deliberately tried to avoid those thoughts because being Mayor of Drummond seemed like such an opportunity for David to lead the excellent life. Of course, it was difficult to live excellently in a world where all the rewards went to men who acted like wolves. Mr. Langhorne had used David because of his personal popularity and political innocence. And now, as Mrs. Veblen seemed to know so well, he expected David to be simply his agent in the City Hall, abusing the people's trust just as Mayor Norris had done during the last administration. But the wonderful joke was that David had committed himself to no one but the people. He, the political innocent, had actually used Mr. Langhorne. When he took office he would be completely free and the men who thought they had bought his loyalty would very soon find out how mistaken they were.

"David isn't afraid, Mrs. Veblen. He fought Senator Hawkins and the Trust Company when he had no power to support him

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in his defiance. But as Mayor he'll have power. He can clear all the corruption out of the City Hall."

"That's what my husband says. David Fraser will be the first man in years to go into the City Hall absolutely free. The old City Hall gang had to choose a candidate who was absolutely without any taint because the scandals about contracts have been so flagrant. Mr. Langhorne thinks he is still going to run things. But David Fraser needs nothing but courage, to protect his freedom."

"He has plenty of courage. He has already suffered for his convictions."

"These men!" Mrs. Veblen scoffed with her habitual air of rueful rage. "They seem not to know that a public servant is supposed to serve anyone but himself. There have always been two Court House political gangs in Drummond. When one has acted too bad, the other seizes the opportunity to rush in and act worse. . . . When we get the suffrage, women will stop all that."

"David will stop it."

But beneath the surface of her confidence, Faith still felt the stirring of a personal fear. It was horrible to have pushed David into that world of fighting wolves. It would not be easy to live this unfamiliar life. Horrible things were always happening in it. She thought of the letter she had found in David's suit when she had sent it to be pressed. It was illiterate, nearly illegible. But the monstrous fact was clear that it threatened David's life. Candidates always received such letters, David had told her when she had asked about it. They were written by cranks who exhausted their ignorant spite in the letters themselves. There was no need to fear them. Probably David was right. Yet it gave her a nagging sense of insecurity to feel that the great enveloping indifference, which protected the ordinary man's personal life had been withdrawn from David, leaving him exposed to the malice of stupid people.

But the sacrifice was already made. David was in the world where people fought hard, either for or against ideas. She was in it with him. And she was glad . . . glad in spite of the dis-

comfort and the problems and the terror, even. David would make some little contribution toward creating the excellent life. She could help him. This was a real start.

Mrs. Veblen had risen.

"I must go home and see that my husband doesn't sit up all night. He's been making some translations of that insane Swede, Strindberg. I must stop him before he goes insane himself. You're not afraid to be alone?"

"I'm going to wait for David. Mr. Judson said he'd gone to a meeting with his backers after the speech. But I think he'll be home soon."

But she found when Mrs. Veblen had gone that she was lonely in this big house and a little frightened, too. The very thought of the crank who had written to David made her imagine that men with guns might be hidden in the dark corners of this huge room. She was grateful for the house, of course. Having it had permitted them to escape from debt. Mrs. Veblen had arranged for them to occupy it while her neighbors, the Archers, were abroad.

The bills are paid . . . the bills are paid . . . she kept repeating to herself, like an incantation against her sense of insecurity. Even the debt to the bank had been settled. She and David were on firm ground almost for the first time in their lives. The bills are paid. . . . It was the loveliest of all imaginable lines, better than any in all the wealth of poetry. "Beauty is truth; truth, beauty." That was a definition thought up by someone who had never had his debts paid. Beauty was not owing anything to the bank. Beauty was a firm footing on which to walk and dance and stamp, if you liked, without fear of falling through.

It was good to have a friend like Mrs. Veblen who did not simply use David to make her dinner parties lively, but actually thought about his needs. Faith had repaid her debt to Mrs. Veblen and the Archers by keeping the house immaculate. These rooms were full of beautiful things. They were also full of dirt. David had laughed uproariously once when he had found her, on her knees, picking dirt out of a crack in the coat closet by the light of a candle. She was absurd, of course. But she liked

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the gesture of creating a divine spotlessness about her. It seemed the only proper return for the blessings that had been conferred on her.

There was a creaking noise in the driveway outside. Faith ran to the window thinking that it must be David. But she saw that a carriage had drawn up under the porte-cochère. Four men stepped out and mounted the steps. The doorbell rang. Faith thought of the letter that David had received and was glad that he was not at home.

The men on the doorstep looked like the ones past whom she had had to edge when she walked home through Bridge Square in the old days at the Argus office. When she opened the door, they all pushed into the hall without waiting to be invited.

"This is David Fraser's residence," Faith heard herself saying. It was ridiculous, she realized, to try to frighten them with a name. If it was the very name that had brought them here, the mention of it would not drive them away. But her voice was steady and she kept her hands clenched firmly before her.

"We just want to speak to Mr. Fraser for a minute."

It was the largest of the men who had spoken. He did not lift his eyes as he addressed her.

"I'm sorry. Mr. Fraser isn't at home. There was a political meeting tonight."

"Oh, yes, ma'am. We was to the meeting. We thought he'd be back by now."

"There was another meeting afterward." The four men eyed her solemnly. It seemed to Faith that they were trying to decide whether or not she was telling the truth. "When you're in politics," she added with an effort at lightness, "life seems to become just one meeting after another."

But the whimsicality was a failure. A questioning glance went from one to another of the men.

"We'll be back," the spokesman said, as all four shuffled across the threshold. "In an hour, boys? . . . Yes, lady, in an hour."

Behind the closed door, Faith listened until the sounds of the carriage wheels had died away. Then she put the door-chain in place and went back to the fire.

HIGH-NOON

This is panic, she thought. My silly arms and legs are shaking because my even sillier mind has put the masks of murderers on four men who are probably harmless.

Harmless! That was the word David had used about the men whom he described as cranks. She forced herself to remember exactly what he had said.

"People like that write letters to men in public life just to make themselves feel important. You never hear of a Mayor being assassinated. Presidents, yes. They're big game. But if the season were open on Mayors the year round, no one would want to take advantage of it. That would be too much like boasting that you had got a fine bag of field mice."

But it wasn't reasonable to expect the insane to act reasonably. The man who had written David the threatening letter might be one of the gang that was being driven out of the City Hall. His whole future might be involved and he might be crazy enough to try to defend his livelihood with a gun.

As though it were a gesture of defiance, she walked about the living room lighting the gas in every burner. But the brilliant illumination gave her little comfort.

If she were Mrs. Veblen she would know exactly what to do. Mrs. Veblen! That was it. She would very quietly get Nina dressed, pick up baby Judith, and run over to Mrs. Veblen's house. But that would leave David to face those four men when they came back. She could do nothing but wait.

Her head had begun to ache. If this was the way one led the excellent life, she wished that her nagging aspiration had never driven them into it. All she wanted was to have David near her, his arms around her assuring her that he was safe.

It would have been a relief to cry, or better still to run to the window and scream to Mrs. Veblen for help. But her voice would never reach across the two wide lawns. There was nothing to do but to try to distract herself by going over the speech that David was to deliver the next evening before a gathering of factory workers on the South Side. Everything that David said must be very simple and direct. She would take out all of what Frank Judson called "the good old hokum." That would be the first

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step toward showing him that David was indifferent to all his ideas and completely sincere about his own plans for reform. There must be an entirely new first page, with all the sly jokes at the opposition left out. There must be no mistake about where David stood and what he meant to do. . . . She began writing eagerly.

The doorbell rang again. It could not have been an hour. Surely those men could not have come back. It must be David. She had put the chain across the door and his key would not open it.

"David?" she called out. There was no answer, but she found she had involuntarily opened the door. The same four men stood outside.

"Mr. Fraser hasn't come back yet."

The leader had a firm hold on the door-knob. "We'll come in and wait," he announced. "It's all right, lady. We won't disturb you none. We'll just sit in here."

They pushed past her and went into the living room. Standing in the hall, Faith saw them draw chairs about the fire and sit with their heads thrust close together. Their voices reached her in a husky whisper.

She was sure, at last, that one of these men was the author of the threatening letter. How was it possible to believe in the harmlessness of men who would force their way into a place where they had no right? She must run for Mrs. Veblen. But that was still no use. David might come home while she was gone. There was nothing that she could do, but sit at an upper window and warn David away from the house when he came home.

But she found, when she had climbed the stairs, that it was impossible to sit still at the window. She paced the length of the room, stumbling over the foot-stool and the children's toys as she moved back and forth in the darkness. She kept her eyes always on the path that led to the door. The whispering of the four men in the living room continued. The throbbing in her head grew worse. She put her hands to her temples as though to press back the throbbing nerves and keep them from bursting through the skin.

HIGH-NOON

"David," she whispered. "David. . . ."

And then, mysteriously, he was there beside her, his arms around her waist, lifting her from the floor.

"Darling, what is it?" he was saying. "You must have fainted."

She caught at his sleeve. "David, there are four men downstairs. . . ."

"There were four men downstairs. But they're gone after a nice, long and very satisfying talk."

"What did they do to you? Oh, my darling. . . ."

He caught her close in his arms. "Didn't they tell you what they wanted?"

"I didn't ask. I couldn't think of anything but that threatening letter."

"My poor dear! They wanted me to promise that if I were elected I would appoint one of them city dog-catcher."

"Dog-catcher!"

David began to laugh. His whole body shook as it always did when he was suddenly conscious of something deliciously grotesque.

"I'll have to appoint you my secretary so that applicants for dog-catcher and garbage collector will have to tell you what they want."

But she could not laugh with him. Nothing was changed. It might as well have been a real danger. She could think of nothing but her gratitude that he was with her. This excellent life . . . this dreadful obligation to herd wolves . . . had not hurt him, yet. Not yet. . . .

XIV

(March, 1898)

HERE they came: his friends, his enemies; the people who had hoped for his defeat; the people who did not care in the least who was Mayor of Drummond but who had a restless taste for celebrations. Curiosity, doubt, and scorn fell into the line before him, each wearing for the occasion of the Victory Ball a mask of congratulation. Each put out a hand to be grasped, each murmured a polite formula and each passed on, with his faith, or his doubt, or his indifference untouched.

If this be victory, Dave thought, it has a strangely flat taste. It needs to be seasoned. But with what?

"My very heartiest congratulations, Mr. Mayor-Elect."

"Good evening, Mr. Senator. I thought you were busy in Washington, taking the if out of the tariff."

"I came home especially to see my old friend elected."

I think it was in the hope of seeing your old friend snowed under by defeat, Dave reflected. But never mind. This is an occasion for high-hearted lying.

Senator Hawkins was equal to the social emergency. Washington was gradually changing him. The old buccaneer had put away his red sash and saber. He wore his evening clothes with the easy grace of one who knew that his tie would never have the effrontery to try to ride his collar; whose shirt bosom knew its place and kept to it with perfect docility. Senator Hawkins spoke with the elegant suavity that he had probably copied from a man like Lodge of Massachusetts. He did not have to raise his voice because he knew that ears would be strained to catch its most casual utterance. But if the ear were strained sufficiently hard it caught an echo of the Senator's vehemence. He could still damn a man to what might be called honorary bastardy if he wished.

HIGH-NOON

The red sash and saber were merely laid away; they had not been discarded.

"We've had some grand fights, Dave. And I expect we're not through yet."

"Oh, no, we needn't fear that. Little David will keep his sling-shot in order and a smooth round pebble in his pocket."

David saw Faith stiffen as she took Senator Hawkins' hand. The comedy of indulgence was not in her repertory. But what Dave knew to be resentment would easily pass for shyness. Faith permitted personal emotion barely to peep under the edge of her formality. In her own way, she was equal to any challenge. That was right, because the victory was really hers. Hers was the desire that he should accept the nomination, though his own laziness had prompted him to reject it. Hers was the moral fervor that had gone into the campaign. Hers the effort; hers the triumph. The only unfortunate thing was that it could not be her fierce nobility of outlook that would foresee all the dangers, the traps, all the subtle efforts that would be made to compromise his administration. But that was impossible. Faith had thrown over him the immaculate mantle and he must wear it no matter how much he might feel like a masquerading clown.

"Well, Dave, you old hoot-owl. Never thought I'd live to see you standing up in a boiled shirt, looking wise. What do you suppose Ben Stanford would say, huh?"

Mrs. Hawkins' outstretched arm looked like a weapon even when it was disguised in white kid. At public receptions she was always out of her proper place in line because she would stop, in her jovial way, to talk to others. It seemed impossible for her to remember that decorum required her to be at the Senator's side. Strange! to be calling her Mrs. Hawkins with a great air of formality! She herself had never attempted to learn a new rôle and was still essentially Roma Russell, the most exuberant of whores. It was her own joke that the Senator had married her, after living a long martyrdom with the querulous invalid who had been his first wife, because she was so indestructibly sound in body. But the Senator's incredible gesture of gallantry might have had more to do with the fact that, in

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the early days, her loans had tided him over more than one financial crisis. She remained the most attractive feature of his life, a spot of color in the black and white design of his new respectability, a souvenir of the ruddy, rugged days.

He must risk a little joke to show that he had as much courage as she in clinging to pleasant memories of the past.

"You know you mustn't twit me about being wise, Roma. The only wisdom middle-age has brought me is that of regretting the sins I neglected to commit."

"Now, Dave! You hush!"

He was unable to tell whether or not Roma was actually shocked. But he knew immediately that he himself lacked the courage to which he had pretended. He was afraid of the past . . . afraid of the trifling secrets his joke might have revealed to Faith . . . afraid of the very mention of Ben Stanford's name. He stole a glance at Faith and was relieved to see that she was talking animatedly. He drew her attention.

"You don't know my wife, do you, Mrs. Hawkins?"

"No, but I want to come and call right away. I hear you got two sweet little girls. I got to see them. Little girls are my special business."

Dave studied Roma Russell's face for a moment and saw that it was blandly innocent of irony. If Faith knew the whole story of this interest in little girls, the Senator's wife would have as much chance of getting into Nina's and Judith's nursery as the camel of getting through the needle's eye. Faith would protect them from contamination, with her two fists, if necessary.

It was curious the way Faith cared for the children. She read all the books on infant care. She went with Mrs. Veblen to lectures and took the most copious notes. She spent hours straining vegetables with scrupulous attention to sanitation. And she was patient with them, too, patient beyond limits that her nervous temperament might so easily have set. When she wrote her articles for the Woman's Page of the Record, she sat on the chilly floor so that she might be always near them and always watchful. They tumbled over her lap, pulling at her paper, snatching at her pencil. It made a pretty picture . . . Faith's excellent

life, clinging a little desperately to its intellectual preoccupations, yet relaxing sufficiently to absorb all the charm of domesticity. . . .

But there was a strange aloofness in her attitude toward Nina and Judith. Faith expected reason of her three-year-old daughter. She not only expected it; she demanded it. On one melodramatic occasion Nina had made a bonfire of her doll-clothes and climbed to the top of the bureau, using the drawers as steps, to get matches to fire it. When Dave had returned that night, he had found Faith, with a stubborn, angry child on her lap, attempting to argue her into remorse. Both were exhausted. But it was Faith who, with hysterical indignation, had to admit defeat at last when the little girl shouted out as her last defiance: "It was a nice fire."

It was comic and, on a deeper level of feeling, infinitely pitiful to see the child and the woman already such bitter enemies. Nina's defiance was, of course, an infantile and confused version of Faith's own fervent single-mindedness of purpose. She had had a splendid, resourceful idea, in building that fire. It had been a beautiful spectacle. Momentarily, Nina had forced her life out of its groove of eventlessness. Her purpose had been defeated and she was angry; angry as Faith herself might have been at a similar flouting of her energy.

But it had been useless to try to make Faith see any resemblance between herself and the child. She had, in fact, bitterly resented the suggestion. To her Nina's mischief was a monstrous corruption of the docility that perfect treatment was supposed to induce in children. The books assured Faith that she had done well by Nina and Nina had done badly by Faith in return. That was all. It was cause for resentment and alarm as well. To Faith, Nina was a changeling.

He was alarmed, too; alarmed because of Faith's lack of adaptability. Her passionate belief in academic learning had closed her mind to the fact that rearing children was an exercise in improvisation. He himself was much more successful with Nina. On the day after she had built her fire in the nursery, he had taken Nina to see a house in the neighborhood that had been burned to the ground.

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"You see, that's what happens when you start a fire inside a house," he had told her. "Everything burns and pretty soon you don't have any house."

Her eyes had widened with terror. "You can't burn Nina's house," she had wailed, trying at first to thrust responsibility away from herself. Then, collapsing into tears, she had wailed: "Nina's a bad girl, but she won't be bad any more."

Dave sighed aloud. Then suddenly coming to himself he straightened his shoulders and found that he was looking into the amused eyes of Judge Veblen.

"What you need is a drink, Dave. I had a cup of punch on my way in. It's too damn weak for a real man. But for a stuffed shirt, like a politician, there may be some virtue in it."

He moved along, his absurd little figure made more grotesque still by his bulging shirt front.

"Well, Mrs. Fraser, do I look pretty for your party tonight?"

He thrust the stiff bosom back and began tugging at the tail of the shirt through his trousers. Perspiring amiably with the effort, he drew a hand over his ruddy bald head and passed along.

Dave exchanged an amused, affectionate glance with Faith. Immediately, he felt guilty for having let his mind frame a judgment against her. There was nothing to criticize, really. It was simply that she had an over-developed reverence for academic wisdom. She lived by the book; and where the book stopped, she stopped, too. She thought of herself as a striving, but untutored, follower of truth. The truth was Herbert Spencer's private possession. Faith herself had humbly to follow his guidance and the guidance of other acknowledged thinkers. Her whole attitude toward living was warped by her too great humility in the dazzling face of learning. Rather, she was too humble and not quite humble enough. She had set her eyes on Matthew Arnold's "high, white star of truth" and could never lower them to see the commonplace emergencies of which human lives are mostly composed. She looked for a vast significance in everything and missed the little meanings. Her failure with Nina could be attributed to nothing but her determination to regard every inconvenience of the daily routine as though it were a major moral crisis.

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If she could only be content with a modest truth, she would see that Nina was a promising child, full of imagination, full of challenging possibilities. But then she would have to see as well that Judith gave some real cause for disappointment. As a baby she had lain sluggishly contented in her bassinet, pulling at her bottle with a steady stolidity that had inspired the nickname, "Falstaff." All of her experiments had been made late. She was as blonde, as rosy, as sweet as a baby on a magazine cover. But in contrast to the black vibrancy of Nina, she possessed almost no interest at all.

Dave's attention was recalled by feeling the confiding pressure of Mrs. Winchester's two hands closed over his own.

"My dear, dear David. You don't know half how proud we are of you tonight."

"If the Winchesters are proud, they have a Winchester to thank for it."

Margaret followed. She inclined her head a little over his hand. Her life with Poe Simpson had made the attitude of submission habitual with her. She had learned nothing except to droop with histrionic docility on any occasion that seemed at all significant.

"Margaret," Dave urged, "don't you begin to take me so seriously or I shall feel that Faith and I haven't a casual friend left in the world."

"You needn't think that I shall be reverent," Kathie's strident voice broke in. "I shall just make my great, big, important brother give me everything I want."

That could be a nuisance, Dave reflected. Lovatt was living in Drummond now. He was quite likely to lose his job as salesman for the seed company at any moment. Kathie's dress testified drearily to Lovatt's chronic bad luck. She had desperately tricked it out with ribbons. But it had about it the makeshift look to which he had always been accustomed in his own mother's clothes.

Poe Simpson's synthetic heartiness boomed in Dave's ear.

"Well, my boy, we made it, by guess and by golly . . . as I

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said to the man who got the grade next lowest to mine in law school."

The confident face was thrust close in unself-conscious caricature of comradery. The red surface was heavily lined with swollen, purple veins. But as Dave stood, struggling with his antagonism against this man, he became aware of a pity that went deeper than dislike. Poe was tired: tired of defeat and of the dissipation through which he sought escape from his defeat. Tired, most of all perhaps, of the swaggering manner he assumed to conceal the private acknowledgment of his failure. His own heartiness bored him; the home, that he had reduced to utter tedium through the success of his tyranny, bored him. He had elaborately contrived to make his own life shabby and now he was infinitely weary of its shabbiness.

For the first time in the history of their relationship, Dave felt an almost affectionate regard for Poe. He felt also an impulse to confess: I'm a fraud, too. I have no business to set up as having principles. Who am I to act as the agent of pious protest against evil? All I have wanted is to live easily; to do a minimum of work and have a maximum of pleasure. I'm smothered with all this nobility and God knows what kind of a mess I shall make of it.

But almost at once his mind rejected the prospect of failure that the image of Poe Simpson had suggested. It was unfair to Faith to indulge in such ideas. Perhaps, it would have been better for them both if she could have been the leader and he could have been the one to stay at home and rear the children. Faith could have become a leader if her fine mind had been subjected to the firm discipline of an exact science. As it was, she loved vague truths and large abstractions which were sometimes difficult to fit into the program of daily living. But their collaboration must go on: she to have the fine principles; he to try to find some realistic application for them.

It must go on because he loved her, loved her for her shining zeal, her radiant aspiration. She would be disappointed in him; she would be disappointed in life itself. But that was because life actually was not good enough for her. It was firm and hard,

at the wrong times, and concessive, at the wrong times. It did not want the excellence that Faith wished to impose upon it. But Faith was still right and all the world wrong. There was nothing for him to do but try, from minute to minute, to follow her intuitions.

And those were not the only reasons why he loved her. There was also the strange, the always amazing truth, that under the armor of this zealot was a woman, who was tender and trusting and in need of protection; one whose stern reticences could be persuaded to melt into abandon; one who needed desperately to be loved.

He must give love to Faith and take it from her until the end of his life, no matter what exactions she might make of him; no matter what mistakes he might have to see her make with the children; no matter how much she might, in the end, be disappointed in him. Faith, he knew, would dominate their lives. He could never bring enough excellence into their experience to satisfy her. He could only try.

Out of the past, an impudent little irony darted into his mind. A teacher had sent home the report to his parents that his scholarship was excellent, and then thinking somewhat better of her generosity and optimism had added, in parenthesis, nearly. It became the nickname by which his brothers called him for years.

Yes, he was still: Excellent (nearly). Faith would find it out. But he must still try.

"Davie," he heard a pleasant voice say. He turned to receive his sister-in-law and brother. As she gazed into his eyes with a curious mixture of affection and awe, Effie burst comfortably into tears.

XV

(April, 1898)

DAVID ceremoniously escorted Faith into the compartment. He had made her promise to keep her eyes shut until the door was closed behind them. She knew what she would see, of course: some evidence of David's extravagant determination to make this trip a great event. They had no business to be spending money recklessly just because David had been elected. But she was determined not to spoil the childish satisfaction that he was taking in his present to her.

"There," he said as the door clicked behind him. "You may look now."

It was as she had expected. He had filled the compartment with flowers. There was also a huge basket of fruit standing on the seat and beside it a pile of books and magazines. She found herself estimating distractedly how much all this had cost; thinking of the odds and ends of bills that the money might have paid. Even in their seeming affluence, there were little half-forgotten items forever turning up to rob solvency of its pure and perfect satisfaction. But she deliberately let her eyes widen as though in childish surprise.

"Darling, it's too wonderful. It's like being married all over again."

Under her hands she felt his shoulders move spasmodically as though he were trying to throw off a burden of protest.

"Oh, no," he said, "better than that. Let's make sure that it's much better than that."

Now she looked at him in genuine surprise. All these years she had assumed that he was perfectly content with the way things had happened at the very beginning of their marriage. She had supposed that for him there had been no tinge of disappointment. But it was clear, at last, that he had been troubled by doubt.

It filled her with a sudden wild panic to realize that the questioning had not been all on her side. Now at the exact moment when her own uncertainty was gone, David's had been exposed.

"Darling, you sound as though you hadn't liked it very much to be married to me."

She tried to keep the tone of the challenge light and humorous. But anxiety crept into her voice. David, responding immediately to its appeal, gathered her protectively into his arms.

"You should know that I didn't mean that. It was just that I was so stupid, so damn stupid. I should have had more understanding and more tact, at my age. But I didn't. Ever since, I've wanted to have the chance to do our first trip together over again, and do it right. I've been pretending to myself that this is the first and that I can make up to you for what was wrong that other time."

She surveyed the little room again. The flowers, the fruit, the magazines, the books, all of David's extravagance had been inspired by the desire to buy back the glamor that he had recklessly tossed away by his failure in tact. He did not know that he had long since bought it back with the tenderness that he had given her always and with his patience during the bad times when she had lost control and scolded him so bitterly.

"David," she said, "you've been good . . . much more nearly right in everything than I have been."

"No . . . no . . ." He seemed frightened at the thought of being loaded with virtues. "You're the one who's been strong and enduring. I've stumbled and bungled all the way. The only sense I've ever shown has been in clinging hard to you."

His arms tightened about her as he spoke. The richness of this moment was something that could never be taken from her. This was the sort of union for which she had always hoped: a union that went as deep as any desire of the body and climbed as high as any aspiration of the mind. She and David had achieved it together and nothing could end it but the death of one or the other.

They had never shared so completely the sense of having an important destiny to fulfill. Until late last night, they had worked,

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side by side, putting the finishing touches to the speech which David was to deliver before the faculty and students of the Law School at Ironton. As the youngest man ever elected to the office of Mayor in a mid-western city, David had been asked to speak on the outlook for the development of city government. He liked the challenge of representing a new spirit in community affairs, one untainted by intimate knowledge of the old complaisant attitude toward corruption. So far from wishing to let the subject trail off into a humorous treatment of human weakness, he had seemed to be under the compulsion of a fanatic's zeal. Faith had felt obliged to urge upon him a touch or two of his characteristic drollery, assuring him that he need not be a Savonarola.

"After all," she said, "if you seem to cast an expectant, an almost hopeful, eye in the direction of the sacrificial flames, you weaken your case. You must be, as you said to Senator Hawkins, the young David going out with confidence and a sling-shot."

Nonetheless she had been proud of his zeal. And ashamed, terribly ashamed of her fear that David might be easy prey for the corrupt men of Drummond. There was now no danger of his winking an indulgent eye when the attempts at plundering the city began.

They were to stay in Ironton with John Haddon and his wife. John must have been responsible for the invitation to appear before the students at the University. Faith's first inclination had been to refuse to go with David. But she had been seized with a great curiosity to see John once more. It was not because she was in the least in love with him any longer. That idol had long since been thrown down, in her mind as well as in her heart. But she wanted to examine all the souvenirs of the past so that, finally and definitely, they could be destroyed. If one kept little treasures lying packed away in a box and never looked at them at all they retained a false value. If you opened the box, you saw that the pressed flowers were faded and scentless, not to be compared with living flowers. You saw that the ribbons were in tatters and the letters yellowed. There was no such charm to all this look of gentle decay as you expected to find. You could throw all the little banners and badges away without a tremor of regret.

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That was what she must do with the souvenirs of her love for John. They cluttered the attic of her mind and she wanted to be rid of them.

When the train started at last, Faith insisted that David read through his speech once more. For two hours, they criticized it, phrase by phrase. As always David excited her to an almost reverential admiration by the skill with which he made his voice forewarn an audience of a change in mood. Even, with her thorough knowledge of his technique, she fell once more under the spell of his manner as he swayed her easily back and forth between earnest sobriety and irresponsible love of impudence.

He looked tired when the rehearsal was over, and Faith sent him to the observation platform to smoke a cigar. She did not mind being alone. The feeling that he went unwillingly was enough to repay her for the sacrifice. It was a kind of luxury to realize that for a few hours nothing that she asked of him would be regarded as an exaction but rather a privilege. But knowing that such a luxury was available was quite enough. She stoically refused to indulge in it.

After a time she tried to read the papers. There was nothing in them but news of the war with Spain. Faith hated every word that the correspondents wrote. The idea that any fight in which men were maimed and killed could be fought idealistically, and in the interests of human welfare, was challenging and confusing. War, surely, was always wrong. Yet there were people who believed sincerely in the effort to curb the tyrannical power of Spain. They were convinced that America's impulse was inspired by the purest kind of idealism.

That was hard to believe. Faith refused to accept the principle of doing ill that good might come of it. Yet it was enormously difficult to prove that there was a fallacy in the argument of people who talked eloquently about the duty to protect the rights of helpless and inferior countries.

The greatest humiliation of her life had come out of the effort to preserve the ideal of peace. She had tried to answer back to the men who indulged in boisterous talk about the sacredness of this particular war. And she had been screamed down by prejudice.

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She had been very reluctant to accept the invitation of the Church of Our Savior to talk about peace. It meant giving up time that belonged to David. But she had been afraid to refuse. At a moment when everyone was attributing cowardice to those who did not believe in war, she felt an obligation to express her opinions staunchly.

Throughout her talk, Faith had been so absorbed in her ideas, so hypnotized by the importance of what she had to say, that she had been unaware of the audience's response. When she had finished, however, the silence in the hall immediately seemed like a weapon raised against her. Before she could escape from the platform, the minister had risen from his chair in the front row. He turned his back on Faith and addressed the audience. The professional unction of his pulpit voice could not conceal the spite of his words.

"What our good sister has come to tell us," he said, "is something to which we all subscribe at times when there is no special mandate addressed to the man or woman of courage. I think that her words might well have been reserved for the hour when we have driven back a cruel and vengeful people to their own country and prevented them from destroying the lives and the very souls of suffering men and women. A people who, in the days of the Inquisition, used the sacred command of Christianity to torture even their own countrymen does not deserve consideration in the very act of preying upon the rights and the lives of others. Let us close the meeting with a prayer for the quick success of our forces so that the idealism of our dear sister may once more rule upon the earth."

It had not been fair to give her no opportunity to answer the prejudiced argument that he had flung at her with all the strength of his authority. If she had tried to speak again she would have added the sin of sacrilege to the sin of treachery. She could hear the tongues wagging. People would say that she had brazenly interrupted prayer to continue with her disloyalties.

Yet there were many men and women who agreed with her that the war was by no means so sacred and disinterested as its defenders tried to make it appear. The United States was trying

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to extend its influence exactly as Great Britain had done and was wearing the same cloak of smug self-righteousness to conceal the fact that selfish gain was what the leaders were after.

She had cried all the way home from the meeting. They had been tears of self-pity until she had suddenly realized that as the wife of the Mayor-elect she might have embarrassed David seriously. It was even possible that she had been trapped deliberately into a difficult position by men who wanted to see David compromised. Dr. Fulton talked about the Inquisition! She could see him presiding over the rack on which she was stretched, turning the screws with undisguised pleasure.

The episode had come to nothing in the end. Two days later, she had received a note from Dr. Fulton, thanking her perfunctorily for her "interesting little address" and assuring her that though he did not agree that peace was at all times obtainable, he valued the sincerity of a wife and mother who even under such trying circumstances clung to it.

He was willing, she read between the lines, to forgive her because she was simply an hysterical woman who could not face the stern necessity that confronted stalwart spirits in a man's world. For David's sake she had to accept this indulgent forgiveness. In the first flush of her resentment she had written angrily to Dr. Fulton. But the letter had finally swirled in tiny pieces ignominiously down the toilet seat.

David had ridiculed her fears that the humiliating episode might hurt him politically, but had been angry at Dr. Fulton's patronizing note. He volunteered with a surprising show of indignation to "horsewhip the damn fool."

The idea of David's ever being betrayed into violence had made her laugh.

"I think, darling, that there's been enough bloodletting in the name of love. I suppose everyone is confused, and everyone is angry because he is confused."

The only remaining effect of the episode had been that she stubbornly refused to know anything about the war. Since it was being fought without her permission, she told herself, she was under no obligation even to read about it.

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When David returned, they had an orgy on the fruit that he had brought instead of leaving the compartment for dinner. That night Faith lay for a long time in David's arms and it was she who was the first to fall asleep.

She woke next morning, saying excitedly to herself that she felt nothing but curiosity at the prospect of seeing John again. What else was there to feel? Certainly not love. That had ended years ago. John would be a stranger, capable of rousing only an idle interest because of his faint resemblance to someone she had once known. Yet she could not deny that her head throbbed painfully. An actual dizziness kept her eyes from focussing properly. It was impossible to concentrate on what David was saying. He must have guessed that she was intolerably confused. For he stopped talking, at last, and they had been holding hands in silence for an hour when the train arrived in Ironton.

Faith stumbled blindly down the car steps and almost directly into John's arms. With the touch of their hands the maddening enchantment was broken. Her head stopped aching and she was able to make conversation about the trip as casually as though she and John had met the day before.

What did I expect? she said over and over to herself. A nimbus? Did I imagine that he would materialize out of a shower of gold? He's just John, a slightly fuller and more compact edition. But just John. He speaks with the same halting utterance. But what was once uncertainty has become now simply a placid determination to find the *mot juste*. He's handsome and neat and admirable. But somehow not as distinguished as David, in spite of being so much neater. David's a richer personality. This other man is cautious and meagre. This other man? Why yes, John, of course! John isn't as fine as David.

And something within her began to soar like a kite, caught up by a strong, shifting, but persistent wind.

She walked through John's house and saw, without envy, that it was spacious and furnished in good taste. She met John's wife and called her "Ernestine" without feeling the pinch of jealousy that she could confess now to having feared. Ernestine was heavy and slow-moving. But there was an attractive mixture of forceful-

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ness and indulgence to the way in which she ruled John. Faith liked her and did not in the least resent having to like her.

The kite soared high and higher.

After dinner David led Ernestine away on the pretext that he wished to see her conservatory.

"Well, Faith," John said when they were alone. Then immediately he added: "You have married a fine man."

It seemed too stupid to agree and to echo his pleasantries with one about Ernestine. Faith said nothing.

"Did you know that your letter announcing your engagement to David Fraser was what kept me from visiting you in Drummond?"

Faith nodded.

"I hoped that you would understand."

She raised her eyes to his. "John, if I had stayed in Meadville . . ."

He finished the sentence for her: ". . . we would have been married by now."

The dizziness was coming back. She could not think clearly. "John," she whispered, "when did you know . . .?" She could not force herself to go on.

"When did I know that I wanted to marry you?" He framed the question with the brisk helpfulness of an attorney interviewing a client. "Do you remember a night when I tried to keep you from going to hear a lecture? Julia Ward Howe, it was. I wanted to tell you that night. When you insisted on going in to the Athenaeum, I had to talk to someone. I confided in Legh. She said that it was unfair to bind you when I had so many years of college before me. I could see that she was right. But I've always been sorry I didn't speak that night."

Then she had not been mistaken! He had loved her, as they stood together, each studying the face of the other with love and happiness and utter confusion. An old humiliation was lifted from her and she was shocked to find that nothing but the humiliation had mattered to her for many years past. No yearning for the lost love rushed in to fill the gap from which shame had

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been taken away. She felt somehow unfair to John. She rebuked herself obliquely by saying:

"We shouldn't be talking this way in your house."

John smiled. "Why not? Your husband took my wife away so that I could say all this to you."

Faith looked up startled. Was it possible that David could have been so generous?

"Oh, yes," John assured her. "There was a glance that passed between them. It gave me permission. And as far as Ernestine is concerned, she . . . she knows that I will always be loyal to her."

Loyal! The word had a chilling sound. If that was really all that John could give Ernestine, it meant that he was disappointed with his life. The realization roused a sudden storm of uncertainty in Faith's mind. Was the same disappointment in store for her? she wondered. The exultant calm with which she had faced him at first might be mere determination not to be jealous. It might be nothing but good manners. If she had to suffer again the misery of wanting him, it would be unendurable. She wished that David and Ernestine would come back.

John seemed to understand. "Shall we go see the conservatory, too?"

He kissed her as they stood, waiting to go. "I must say it once, you know. I love you, Faith."

She could not lift her eyes to his.

"I thought once that I could never recover from losing you," she said.

"We should have done well together. You would have been more of a help to me in my work than my wife has been."

Suddenly the world righted itself. What had been chaos a moment before, what had been a confused mixture of impulses and memories and desires, vaguely felt, became once more the known world. John had put things straight with that strange confession of how little he wanted from a woman. John measured a wife's desirability by what help she was able to give him.

The silence between them became awkward. Faith caught at his words and repeated them.

"A help in your work. . . . Yes, that's all that matters."

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But a note of irony had crept into her voice. She glanced up quickly to see if he had noticed it. He looked sad, reproachful and defiant all at once.

"Now you're accusing me of being selfish . . . as everyone else does."

"Oh, no, John. . . . It's true. . . . I always knew your work would be important. And it is."

They had been talking quite casually when they entered the conservatory.

"John," said Ernestine coming up with a handful of violets, "you must give these to Faith."

He took them into his hands and held them for a moment. "Violets," he said. "They're for remembrance, aren't they?"

When she went upstairs at last, she felt almost hysterically relieved. She wanted to leap from the door and plunge into the center of the great bed, laughing and flinging her arms in an abandonment to happiness. The whole drama with John had resolved itself into a boy and girl comedy of errors. John wanted a useful wife and he wasn't quite sure that he had got the best. Julia Ward Howe had come between them. Julia Ward Howe was "the other woman" in the moment of life that she and John had shared. "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," said Julia Ward Howe, thereby breaking up a romance. It was strange and hilarious and more than a little absurd. But what mattered was that she loved David and only David. She had him. She had his love. And she was happy, happier than she had ever imagined that people were supposed to be.

Her childish mood was absorbed into one of calm content. She stood quietly in the center of the room, waiting for David. When he came in, he paused at the door almost as though he were not sure of his welcome. She went to him and put her arms around his neck, feeling secure and confident and at peace.

"What did you think of him, David?" she asked.

"He's a Greek god."

"Yes, I suppose, he is," she said tentatively. "But darling, I'd very much rather live with a man."



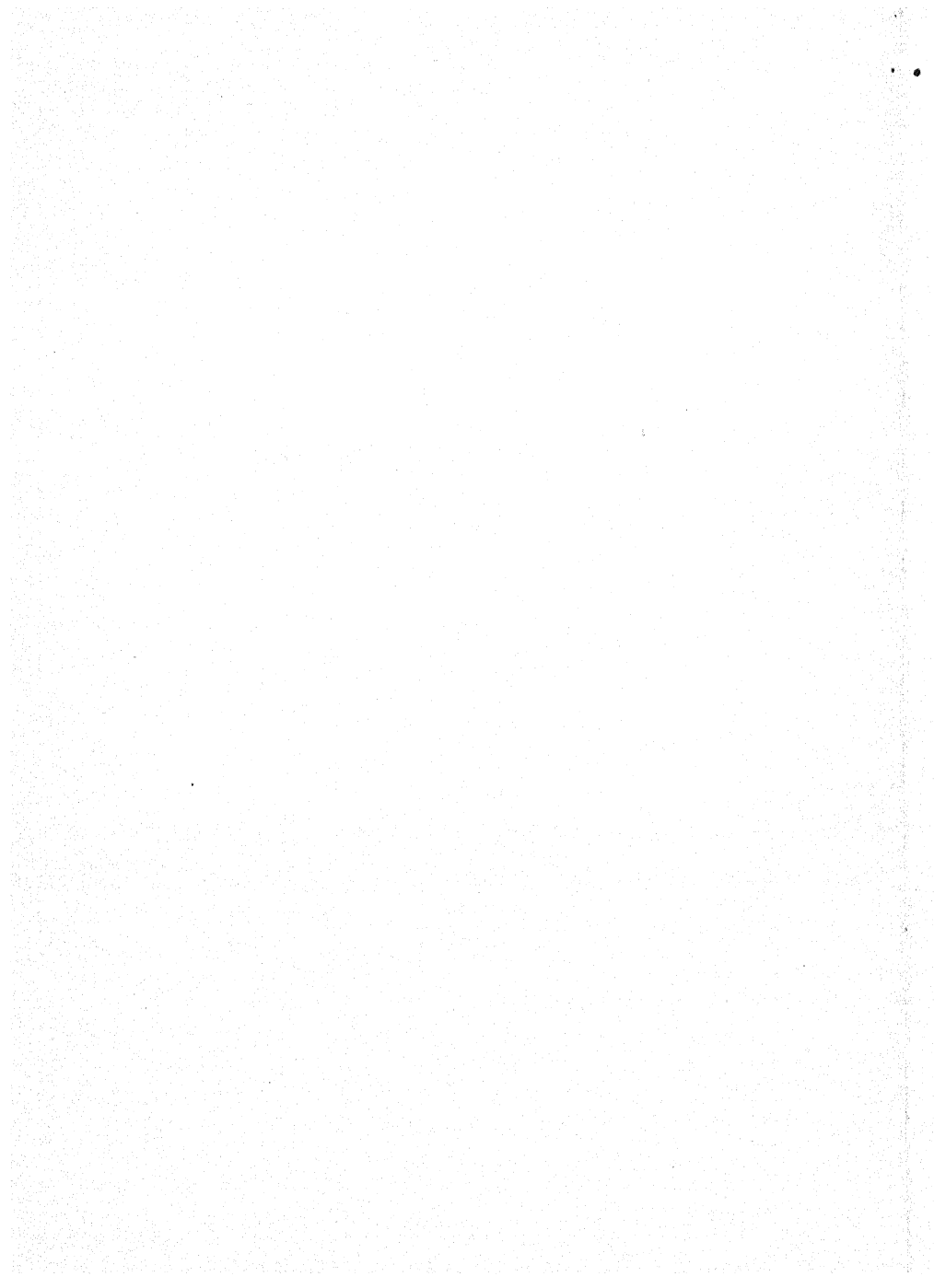
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What was wonderful to her was that she meant it, in all innocence, with ardor and without reservation. This was the moment of fulfillment for which her life was lived. She felt rich. Now life could really begin at last.

III

AFTERNOON

“Even in the afternoon of her best days. . . .”



I

(November, 1898)

FAITH sat in David's office in the City Hall. It was the first time that she had come here since his term had actually begun. In imagination she had many times swept into this large room and run its full length, to sit on David's knees under the horrified gaze of all the bearded predecessors in office whose portraits hung in a row above the desk. The other Mayors of Drummond had been, for the most part, petty tyrants whose private morality was as dubious as their public ethics. It would have amounted to reckless innovation in their eyes, Faith fancied, to watch a mere wife taking such liberties with an occupant of the Mayor's chair. Privileges of that kind were reserved for the casual ladies of the town.

But now there was no David sitting at the desk and she would not have run to sit on his knees if he had been there. She was too deeply disturbed by the news that she had read in the paper after David had left home. He had not had the courage to tell her his plans, and she had learned of his betrayal almost by accident.

The atmosphere of the whole City Hall seemed demoralized. David's secretary was unable to tell her where the Mayor had gone. His defiant manner seemed to indicate that he would not have told if he could. He was definitely disinclined even to let her pass into David's room. She had had to snub him quite sharply before he had consented to open the door for her.

She walked up and down the full length of the room, wondering how it could have happened that David had been persuaded to repudiate everything that they had agreed were to be the fundamental principles of his administration. His first official act had been to throw away, with what seemed like deliberate cynicism, every attitude that he had announced, in his speech

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before the students at Ironton, as essential to the conscientious public servant.

What had shocked Faith almost as much as his betrayal of principle was his betrayal of herself. No doubt that really hurt her more. She had felt that they understood each other intimately and she had delighted in the feeling of her nearness to David. And all the time he had been planning to discard her influence at the very first opportunity.

He would say, of course, that he had not wanted to burden her with the details of his public responsibility. In fact, she had allowed herself to be distracted by the prospect of having another child. Ever since the trip which David liked to call their second honeymoon, she had hoped to become pregnant again. David wanted a son, and so did she. The certainty that, in June, she would have their first eagerly-awaited child in her arms had made her recklessly happy. But it was not fair for David to use her preoccupation as an excuse for shutting the door of his mind against her. Surely, she had a deeper right to his confidence, now, than ever before.

She heard David's voice outside. As the sound came nearer and nearer, her heart beat fast. When she had learned from the morning paper what he meant to do, she had been first shocked and then indignant. She had been carried on the wave of her anger until this moment and now suddenly it rolled away from her. Outside the door was the man to whom she had so happily submitted in many a moment of love, inviting subjection, relishing the sense of becoming simply and completely a woman. And now, though David was acting like a cowardly little boy, she could not dissociate him from the man whom she herself had invested with the right to command her. All the accusations that she had planned to fling at him seemed beyond her strength to assemble and to project. She was left, trembling and panic-stricken as though she no longer remembered why she had been so outrageous as to invade his office.

The door opened and David came in. He stood still, keeping his eyes fixed upon her anxiously as he fumbled blindly for the knob. He shut the door before he spoke.

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"You must have followed me straight downtown, darling."

"I did." She tried to word a preliminary pleasantry about being unable to endure the separation a moment longer. But the coquetry refused to take form. The plaintive and demanding wife whose rôle Faith wished never to play chose this moment inappropriately to assert herself. "Oh, David, dear, please don't appoint that man."

She was irritated at the tearful break that had come into her voice. No one, listening impersonally, could have imagined that Faith knew all the reasons why Albert Swan should not be appointed Chief of Police. Her protest had sounded exactly like that of any interfering fool who had a purely personal and probably quite trivial reason for trying to influence her husband's decisions.

David's sensitive ear had caught the plaintive note. He responded as though he were a busy, but tolerant, man, trying to deal with the hysterical protests of an immature woman.

"But darling, I have appointed him. I suppose you saw the announcement in the morning paper."

"Then you'll have to recall the appointment."

David's patronizing air had sobered her. Let him use that method of dealing with people who could be influenced by it. He should know, by this time, that it could not baffle her for more than a moment. Though he chose to ignore the fact, because it happened to be convenient, he knew that they had gone together over the case of Mr. Swan many times. David could not pretend to be unaware of the arguments against the appointment because he himself had listed them a dozen times.

Her bluntness had shamed him out of the position that he had tried brazenly to take. And now he stood before her looking like a confused and defiant little boy who has been caught in serious mischief.

"You know I can't do that, Faith. I'd look like the worst kind of vacillating fool if I were to recall my very first official act."

"You'll look like something considerably worse than a fool, David, if you appoint Swan Chief of Police."

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"Don't make insinuations, Faith. It isn't a rôle that becomes you."

He was trying hard to be angry. If he could work up a temper he might be able to improvise an attitude that would justify the course he wanted to take. He despaired of finding help in his plight if he remained cool and reasonable. So he blustered childishly in an effort to find excuses.

She walked up to him and stood looking squarely into his face. "You're right. It is a new rôle for me to indulge in insinuations. I don't like the rôle. So I'll make myself perfectly clear. If you appoint Swan Chief of Police you'll look like a hypocrite. You'll look like Mayor Norris, in a new disguise. People will say that you've been mouthing high-minded sentiments, smugly, just so that you could get into office. They'll say that you've scourged everyone, right and left, with scorn for corruption because you wanted a chance to be corrupt yourself. If you don't recall your appointment, you'll have to face ridicule as a man who abuses other politicians for accepting bribes in the hope of being offered bribes. I don't say that is what you are. I say that that is what you'll look like to anyone who knows a few of the facts about the career of the man you have had the reckless effrontery to appoint as Chief of Police."

"All that stuff about Swan!" David's voice sounded sulky. It was clear that he did not enjoy his rôle of defiant child but that he was stubbornly determined to play it out. "I've been looking up his record. The charges that hysterical old ladies of both sexes have made against him are mostly lies."

She caught at the sleeve of his coat. "David, how can you say that! You told me yourself that he knows every criminal in the United States and that he lets them come to Drummond on the promise that they won't break the law here."

His eyes glanced toward hers and then away. "Yes, that's more or less true. It's one way of protecting a city. There have been fewer major crimes in Drummond during the last ten years than in most cities of the same size."

"But, David, to make a principle of giving sanctuary to criminals!" Suddenly she remembered a worse accusation against Swan.

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Her voice rose with excitement as though it were necessary to reject the idea with violence in order to make David see how repugnant it was. "You said that he helps them to dispose of stolen goods and actually accepts a share."

"Oh, God! A man is such a fool to talk to a woman."

He did not even attempt to deny his words. Something about this place, this very room, infected with the cynicism of all his predecessors, had perverted his mind. His only attempt was to repudiate his promises to herself.

She must remember not to be angry. She must cling to any bit of influence that she still had with him to save him from making this disastrous mistake.

"Is that really what you mean, David?" she asked calmly. "Do you want me to go away and never again to expect to know anything about your work?"

He took her by the hand, without a word, and led her to a chair beside his desk at the end of the long room. His face looked stern and aloof. It was his intention, she thought, to try to put her at a disadvantage by assuming the full authority and dignity of his post before he spoke to her again. But the effort was a failure. For when he was seated at his desk, he could only draw a deep sigh and then begin falteringly:

"Faith, there's a lot that neither you nor I knew about the actual working of politics before we got involved in the dirty mess. Once you're in you have to make compromises if you want to stay in. I probably should have talked to you about it, but you've had other things to think about. But I've already learned this: The only way to be an effective reformer is to take on the job, a little at a time, and not to frighten people by being too energetic, all at once. If I were to make Langhorne think that I couldn't be reasonable, as he calls it, he'd break me overnight. And then where should I be? Out in the cold without any opportunity at all. It's better to work slowly from within."

For a moment she examined what he had said. All the clichés of opportunism had crept into that one statement of his new attitude. David was prepared to be reasonable in Mr. Langhorne's way. Very well! But first he must be reasonable in the perfectly

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simple and untainted way that the two of them had adopted before he took office.

"Who is it that wants you to appoint Swan?" she asked abruptly. "It's Mr. Langhorne, isn't it? And why does he want Swan appointed? Isn't it because he owns a lot of property where there are houses of prostitution and gambling rooms? Isn't it because he doesn't want them molested by the police? He wants a Chief of Police who will have tact enough not to interfere. It's true, isn't it? He likes to have Drummond full of criminals because they gamble a great deal and drop into Mr. Langhorne's pocket the money they got in the last bank hold-up."

She had not been clearly aware that she knew so much. These suspicions had crept into her mind during the campaign, to be pushed aside and partly buried by her desire not to believe them. But now she saw from David's look of shame and irritation that her accusations were all quite true. The tacit acknowledgment hung between them like a thick, rolling cloud of smoke through which neither cared, nor dared, to move toward the other. But it was David who did make the attempt at last.

"Darling," he said with an air of urgent persuasiveness, "these are things that I haven't been able to discuss with you because they are too far removed from anything you know about. But there are people, you know, who believe in legalized prostitution, who think that it is the best possible solution. . . ."

"David," she interrupted, "are there also high-minded people who believe that hoodlums who laugh at all the institutions of law and government are the ones best suited to give the Mayor his instructions?"

She was angry now. In a moment she would be scolding him here in his own office, perhaps with his secretary listening at the door, to spread the news of how the Mayor's wife had humiliated him, Oh Lord, let her hold her tongue. Let her not lash out at David in fury at being patronizingly pushed out of the man's world into which she had dared to thrust her way. And all on the ground that she was too pure to understand the workings of the affairs of men! That was the way in which women were always being sidetracked and isolated in their purity, hedged round with

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a set of passive virtues that they must not attempt to cast aside if they did not wish also to renounce their womanliness.

No, she could not hold her tongue. But at least she could keep her voice quiet.

"Who elected you Mayor of Drummond, David?"

He shifted uneasily in his chair. "Well, I suppose, it was Langhorne if you want me to be blunt about it."

Why not be blunt in the name of Heaven! Men hated bluntness. They loved slyness and indirection and the traditional way of doing things. They were the reactionaries, always.

"And who is Mr. Langhorne?" she heard herself asking. In spite of all her efforts at control her voice had risen. But she could not help it. She must go on. "I suppose he's the new boss. Or is he just the new agent of the old gang? What is that phrase you used about the men to whom Mayor Norris was expected to report? The 'kitchen cabinet.' Is Langhorne the new leader of the old kitchen cabinet?"

Again she saw that her angry intuition had been correct. The old gang had compromised itself so badly that it had to go into hiding. They had taken a new leader in Langhorne and a new errand boy in David. And things were to go on exactly as before. She rose to her feet.

"David, I've got your child here," she said, touching her body. "I need you more than I've ever needed you before. But if you don't recall that appointment and let Langhorne know that you're your own boss, I'll leave you."

He rose and caught at her shoulders. "Faith, you're talking like an hysterical woman."

"I talk like a woman because you won't listen to me as you'd listen to a man. You leave me no weapon except hysteria. But I mean it—every word."

"Sit down," he urged. "Let me talk to you. I've got to make you understand. If I want a political career, if I want a job . . . bread and butter . . . I can't let Langhorne down."

"Don't try to put it off on me, David. You won't need bread and butter for me if you decide to obey Langhorne. I don't know why you can't let him down. He'd let you down in a

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minute. You say so yourself. And how about the people who've voted for you, believing that you were going to be honest and courageous? Is it all right for you to let them down!"

He said nothing, but stood glaring at her in impotent anger. She picked up her bag from the desk.

"I've told you how I feel, David. You ought to know that I mean what I say."

She turned and walked out of the room, looking neither to right or left as she passed through the outer office.

But she had barely got to the street before she began to cry. As she walked through the crowded streets, trying to conceal her tears, it was of the forlornness of her own position that she was thinking. She had made a grand theatrical gesture in defense of moral integrity. She had defended the people of Drummond. But what did the people of Drummond really matter to her? They hadn't wit enough to defend themselves. But if David let her down, if he forced her to carry out her threat, what should she do, where could she go? And what would she be without him? Nothing . . . Nothing . . .

She stopped short and turned back toward the City Hall. But after a step or two she paused again. She couldn't take back what she had said. If David chose to put her head on the block, she would make no attempt to lift it.

She walked on toward home.

II

(June, 1899)

THE fragrance of the linden trees blew in over the bed where Faith lay nursing her son. . . . Sweet and gentle as redemption was the summer air. . . . The line entered her mind as though it were something from a poem only vaguely recalled, instead of being her own invention. She might try to make a poem around it. But an ironic reflection killed the impulse. There was always in her that feeling of a stern obligation to elevate her sensations and make them worthy of poetic expression. Why could she not be content simply to lie still and enjoy her tranquillity, letting the scent of the baby's warm head mingle with the scent of the blossoming bows? She did not really feel redeemed, just happy with the baby lying in the circle of her arm.

The child's hold on her breast loosened. Before she could draw him close once more, the deep blue eyes rolled wonderingly at her and the mouth twitched in anxiety. Then, as he felt a drop of milk on his tongue, he reached greedily and closed his eyes again. A profound content, like her own, seemed to settle in his body as he began drawing firmly and steadily on her breast.

It had been David's suggestion that they name the baby Joel. That was characteristic of his generosity and thoughtfulness. Faith herself had thought about names hardly at all because she had not dared to hope that she might have a son. But here he was in her arms. It gave her an exciting sense of the continuity of life to be so closely linked to another Joel. Papa had been dead for years, a whole decade! Yet here he might be again, his spirit contained in this small body. She, the bridge between them . . . she, permitted to pass on to her son the love of the excellent life that she had received from Papa.

Tears came to her eyes and she drew the nestling body closer still.

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When she looked up Mamma and Mrs. Veblen were standing in the doorway.

"I've brought you a few flowers from my garden," Mrs. Veblen said, "in exchange for just one more look at that boy."

"He must go back to his own bed now," Mamma announced firmly, gathering him up.

The baby lay for a moment in Mamma's arms, sleepy and sated. Then thrusting out his own arms and legs with a humorous air of muscular exultation, he opened his eyes as though looking for applause.

"Isn't it magnificent the way new-born babies always imagine themselves to be acrobats," Mrs. Veblen observed. "He thinks he is impressing us by flexing his biceps."

Faith caught at Mamma's sleeve. "Let him stay with me just a minute longer."

"We don't want him to tire you, my dear."

"As though that shining creature could tire me," Faith protested aloud when Mamma was gone. "He's been in the world three weeks now, Mrs. Veblen, and in all that time he cannot have experienced anything but the sensation of being swathed in protection. What do you suppose the adult world would be like if we all felt secure like that? It might be wonderful, mightn't it?"

Mrs. Veblen paused in her task of arranging the flowers.

"I don't believe in Utopias. I only believe in common sense and Woman's Suffrage. Lady Fraser, you're entirely too much disposed to want to bundle people up in security. And you must get over it. Your business is to train your children to live in the world as it exists, not in some ethereal element that you have stored away in that fine, porcelain vase you use for a head."

Faith laughed. She did not mind such gentle abuse. Mrs. Veblen's philosophic view of life was entirely different from Faith's own. It was an attractive view of life, too. Faith had watched it closely since David had bought the Archer house and the Veblens had become permanent neighbors. There were a dozen young Veblens ranging in age from twelve to two. They wandered over the large grounds, wearing coarse lumber-jack clothes in winter and, in summer, scarcely anything at all. The

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older children built their own ice-boats to sail across the lake or bred dogs or rode the horse, bareback, each following his own rugged inclination. Mrs. Veblen's piano rang out at all hours of the day under some child's untrained but emphatic fingers. One stumbled over young Veblens lying on their stomachs in the pasture, sketching the horse as it stood grazing. Mrs. Veblen provided every opportunity for expression and limited her children's activities by a minimum of discipline. She seemed always serene, confident and in complete control of her household.

"We can't all be goddesses like you, Mrs. Veblen. You preside over your family with the perfect poise of a Juno who knows that her children are immortal."

"I know very well that my children aren't immortal and I don't like broken bones any better than you do. But you have to run the risk of giving your children freedom. You can't live their lives for them. The sooner they learn to live their own the better."

Faith felt a frown teasing at her brow. It did not seem fair for Mrs. Veblen to be stealing Spencer's principles like that. She did not really understand Spencer. Her program left out the most important thing and that was giving children a background for their spiritual development. Mrs. Veblen was concerned only with their material training. That was the fatal flaw in an attitude that seemed on the surface so wise and good.

"I suppose we'll just have to bring up our children each in his own way and compare notes on our systems forty years from now."

Mrs. Veblen drew a chair close to the bedside.

"You're trying to use your New England technique of polite refrigeration on me. I don't want the argument put into cold storage for forty years. It will be of no interest to either of us then, even if we should be alive. You're making a mistake with your Nina, Lady Fraser. I've seen it. There's an open antagonism between you. It's because you won't let the child have her own ideas. Why won't you? They're mostly harmless."

"Yes, like setting fire to the house."

"My dear, of course they set fire to the house. But what's a fire department for? You devote yourself to Nina, but with a

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kind of desperate and anxious preoccupation. With the new baby, can't you manage to be a little less intense?"

There were tears in her eyes, Faith realized. She must stare hard before her until they were absorbed. Mrs. Veblen had no right to spoil her pleasure in the new baby. Perhaps, she had made mistakes with Nina and Judith. But she meant to do everything perfectly for Joel. The image before her mind ever since he had been born was that of Mrs. Waldron, living selflessly for Buford. She had written to Buford telling him that. He had answered appreciatively and affectionately with a letter which enclosed a photograph of his wife and their three children. His mother was in the picture, too, the center of the loving attention of all the rest. It showed that there were legitimate ideals of dedication which other people recognized even if Mrs. Veblen did not. In bringing up Joel she would keep the example of Mrs. Waldron always before her. It was better than any that Mrs. Veblen had to offer.

"I've made you angry, haven't I, Lady Fraser?"

Thinking of Mrs. Waldron had restored Faith's confidence. She was able to flash at Mrs. Veblen a bright smile of disavowal.

"After all, my dear," Mrs. Veblen went on, "I have to talk to you intimately because we are the only women in our whole acquaintance who are seriously interested in ideas. You ought to talk back to me instead of conveying yourself off into the Ice Age. There's plenty to say in your own defense. Look at the way you've always helped David Fraser."

Faith had waited a long time for this moment when Mrs. Veblen would have to admit that David had done well in office. Her own moments of doubt had been made the more heavy by the memory of how Mrs. Veblen had questioned whether he would be able to resist the pressure of the City Hall gang. But now David had completely justified himself. Faith could take his triumph, and hers, quite casually.

"There was never any reason to doubt David. He has courage."

"Yes, magnificent courage. And I've always suspected that a lot of it is stored in this small body." Mrs. Veblen leaned forward and tapped Faith's shoulder. "Now, don't resent that.

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When you know a man and wife intimately you're bound to draw on your knowledge of their private characters to interpret everything that either of them does in public. I think that when David Fraser recalled his appointment of Swan as Chief of Police that was your influence."

No . . . no. She mustn't say that, or think it! No credit should be taken away from David himself. Faith started to draw herself up in bed as though to oppose Mrs. Veblen with a show of physical strength.

But Mrs. Veblen pushed her gently back against the pillows.

"I should never say that to anyone else. And it doesn't really matter. Only it would have been like you to insist on protecting him against such a mistake. It really takes no credit from David Fraser. You remember how the papers all praised him. Even the moment of hesitation made him seem a stronger figure because it showed that he had resisted active pressure. Everyone in Drummond knew how heavy that pressure could be. When he showed Albert Swan out of the Court House and appointed Patrick Downey instead, everyone knew that he was perfectly sincere in his determination to run a reform administration and run it all by himself."

If she were to belittle her share in David's affairs deliberately, Faith decided, she might be able to persuade Mrs. Veblen that it scarcely existed at all.

"In a way you're right, Mrs. Veblen," she laughed. "I have made a little contribution to David's career. But not one that is very flattering to my intelligence. David says that he learned his technique of reform from me. You know how he has always laughed at the way I clean house! Well, he has cleaned house at the City Hall in the same way: picking dirt out of the cracks in dark corners by the light of a candle. The only thing to the credit of either of us is that we're naïve and inexperienced. We don't recognize sacred dirt when we see it, so we clean it up out of sheer stupidity. David says that he will go down in history as the inventor of the Hat-pin-and-Candle school of reform."

Mrs. Veblen smiled indulgently. "That explains everything. I've

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always said that he couldn't have done better if he'd been a woman."

There was no use trying to persuade Mrs. Veblen to give up one of her fixed ideas. Faith laughed with vexation. "Mrs. Veblen, I've been so sick with this baby that for months I've scarcely known what David's doing."

"Then it's high time someone brought you the news." Mrs. Veblen's eyes were glowing with a zealot's satisfaction. "I think he put a flaming sword into the hands of Patrick Downey instead of the ordinary policeman's night stick. Together they've closed the gambling houses and all the other little places of entertainment that have made the worst criminals in the United States quite happy to settle down cozily in Drummond for months at a time."

Faith nodded her head a little impatiently. She had known all that, of course. Mrs. Veblen needn't have taken her comment so literally.

"But he hasn't been satisfied with those showy reforms," Mrs. Veblen went on. "I've watched him carefully and I've seen him force through one solid improvement after another. Things like making the aldermen accept an amendment that provides salaries for license clerks instead of letting them gouge whatever fees they can out of the public. It will save thousands of dollars for the city. And he has made life and death less of a beautiful dream for the Coroner. Johanson had worked up an elaborate system of bribery and intimidation on which he was getting comfortably rich. Your David removed Johanson and the system at a single stroke."

It was strange, Faith thought, that Mrs. Veblen should know so much more than she herself about the details of David's administration. Politics, of course, had been Mrs. Veblen's passion ever since she had enrolled in what she called the Suffrage Cause. But now that the baby was born, Faith told herself, she must not let him interfere any longer with her interest in David's affairs. It was terrifying to think that the four walls of her house might enclose her so completely that she could not get beyond them. That mustn't happen. She wouldn't let it happen.

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"Of course you know that David Fraser has earned an honest man's reward: bitter enmity from a lot of powerful people."

Faith sighed. "Yes," she said aloud, "you were right about Mr. Langhorne. He resigned from the François Villon Club when David was elected to membership. He doesn't even speak to David on the street."

"Oh, yes, the better element! It has turned pretty nasty. That whole group has been involved in the contract scandals. When David Fraser refused to authorize the Blake deal for heating the City Hall and the public schools, a number of our noisiest Christians in the Presbyterian church began snarling at him. It seemed so iniquitous for him to save the public money by insisting on open bidding for the contract."

Faith turned her head wearily on the pillow. Mrs. Veblen was a little like one of Job's comforters: bringing up all these anxieties while she seemed to praise David for the staunch integrity that was wearing him out. He had aged during this year in office. His hair was getting gray and thin. He had more and more frequent attacks of that wretched stomach trouble. David only laughed when she urged him to see a doctor. It was nothing but Newspaper Man's Gut, he assured her. Everyone who had worked in a City Room for fifteen years or more had it. But he did not let it interfere with his work. He had been untiringly conscientious.

She sat up in bed. Mrs. Veblen must not be allowed to think that she appreciated David better than his own wife.

"You don't know half how good he's been," she said earnestly. "People won't give him a moment's rest. They seem to regard him as a sort of foster father to the whole town. I've tried to help him with his correspondence. It's made up mostly of scolding demands for jobs. There was a whole series of letters from a criminal at Tioga prison. I couldn't make out what he wanted at first. He just kept on explaining that his wife couldn't go out as a laundress any more because she was having the change of life. There were four small children to support. David was supposed to do something about it."

"Good heavens! He can't be bothered with things like that."

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"But the touching thing is that he lets himself be bothered. He actually interviewed the laundress, with the change of life, and got her a job as caretaker of someone's summer home. People impose on him terribly. They walk in on him, present him with fancy walking-sticks and then slyly suggest that a rich man like the Mayor will, of course, want to pay something for the present. He's expected to be an executive, an official host, a public entertainer, an employment agent and a parent to all the waifs and strays. No matter how I protest, he keeps on trying to be everything that anyone asks him to be."

"My dear, you mustn't let him work so hard."

"But how can I stop him? He goes out to speak half the nights in the week. When I urge him not to, he just laughs and picks up the first speech that turns up in his desk drawer and goes. I'm so glad that Judge Veblen comes over on Sundays to make him play chess. It's the only relaxation he ever has."

"Your husband always beats him. When he comes home after one of those three-hour sessions, he looks as desolate as though he'd just lost his last friend, his house and his money, all at once." Mrs. Veblen rose and put on her hat. "But I'll see that he comes often," she added.

When Mrs. Veblen was gone, Mamma came back to sit with Faith.

"Did you have a nice talk with your friend?" Faith nodded. "She seems very intelligent. Quite underbred, of course. I mean the way she dresses seems a little . . . a little . . ."

Poor Mamma! She never could resist an opportunity to show what a lady she herself was. There was a curious jealousy underlying all the half-criticisms that she offered of everything in which she herself had no part.

She sat down in the chair that Mrs. Veblen had left and spread her skirts daintily.

"I think we've settled everything very nicely in your new house." She surveyed the room with an air of genial complacency. "My big bed looks as well here as it ever did in the Meadville house. I think Margaret and Porter were very generous to let you have it."

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Faith did not answer. Mamma had conveniently forgotten that David had paid Poe Simpson fifty dollars for the big bed. As the tradition of gentility died a lingering death for her and her favorite daughters, Mamma clung the more desperately to her pretenses. Like the people who tormented David at the City Hall, Mamma scattered her largesse and then demurely asked to be paid for it.

"I do hope," she went on, "that David will want to help Porter in return. Surely, there is some position that could be found for him in the city government."

"Perhaps, Mamma. But we must wait. David has just given his brother Joseph a job. I'm afraid he won't want to challenge criticism by making a place for another member of his family; at least, not for a little while."

"But David can do anything. Porter says that he is very popular."

"With some people, Mamma. And very unpopular with others. Mrs. Veblen has just been telling me how many enemies David has made by being honest."

The endless, exhausting demands! The shabbiness of having to protect David, even in his own home, from people who clung to his coat-tails and demanded and demanded and demanded . . . !

Mamma had placidly decided to ignore Faith's lack of responsiveness.

"Yes," she repeated, "everything is so nice here. You and David are fortunate. I wish that something as nice could be found for poor Kathie and Lovatt."

Faith's hands closed in panic on the sheet. Mamma was preparing for a raid from a different direction. She wanted to take away the privacy and security that David had found for himself. David's very house was to be presented to Kathie. The next suggestion would be, of course, that the Fleming family might move into the empty rooms. Kathie would be company for Faith and Kathie's little girls, who were so bright and quick, would be stimulating to Nina and Judith. Wouldn't that be nice! No, it

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wouldn't be nice at all. David's home must be protected for him even at the cost of "grieving" Mamma.

"Yes," Faith heard herself saying in a firm, clear voice. "I love having a bedroom for each of us and large grounds for the children to play in. But the best thing of all is that it gives David a chance for privacy at the end of a hard week. I think he has earned the right to a little rest. We should never have been able to buy this house if David hadn't inherited that \$3,000 from his mother on the insurance policy he paid for her all those years. The house is heavily mortgaged. But we can just manage the payments by being very careful and not taking on any more responsibility, direct or indirect."

She paused, feeling suddenly impudent and audacious. It was the first time she had ever defied Mamma and the excitement made her heart beat fast. But she did not care if she had been selfish. She was fighting for David, not herself. If Lovatt had kept his money he would still be rich, much richer than David could ever hope to be. It was his own fault that he was poor now. He'd been a fool. But that was no reason why he and his family should be hung around David's neck.

No, she had no intention of letting David assume responsibility for her family. Everything that Mamma would say about the Flemings was true. Lovatt was gentle and sweet and uncomplaining. The little girls were as precocious as Kathie had been at their age. Kathie herself had been disciplined by her recent experiences. She worked hard and had stopped whining and begging. But they must work out their problems for themselves. This house was her world now. Within its walls, she must create the excellent life that Papa had taught her to long for. She could live the excellent life only through her children. That was her task and she did not propose to let Kathie interfere with it.

From the droop of Mamma's head, Faith could see that she was much more grieved than usual . . . grieved in her stern, silent way. But as she lay there, tense and excited, a bitterness that she had always fought before invaded her. Let Mamma be grieved if she must. Always, always, Mamma had made a refined technique of plundering and pillaging and laying waste. She had

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robbed Faith of everything that she very much wanted. Robbed her of childhood, of a chance for education, of John—when John was what she thought she must have or die. And when Mamma could no longer rob on a grand scale, she had begun pilfering. She took Faith's salary, her small treats, like the theater tickets Ben Stanford had offered. Worst of all she had taken the margin of security that Faith's ability to work might have meant for herself and David. Mamma had not been a good mother. She was not a good mother now. Faith was through being her victim.

This house that Mamma wanted to take from her was David's. She must create something beautiful in it . . . something with which Papa would be pleased. She would devote herself to David and correct any mistakes that she might have made with the children. They must have the excellent life.

"Yes," she said aloud, "it's a lovely house. When David came to tell me about it, he described it as 'doing a general nestling business in the hills.' David is so amusing. And he hasn't lost his humor, even though he works so hard. Oh, Mamma, don't you love the smell of the lindens? I know I shall always associate it with feeling happy and secure."

Happy and secure! Yes, that was the way she felt now and the way she meant to make David feel. This was their first real chance to have the excellent life and she would make the most of it. No one, not even Mamma, could be allowed to take it from her.

III

(February, 1900)

FAITH sat in the women's lounge at the Commercial Club waiting for David to take her home. The excitement of the evening had brought on one of her headaches. But she must be patient. The men who crowded around David, congratulating him on the success with which he had carried off the banquet, would not let him escape for at least half an hour. She lay down on the sofa. Here in this secluded corner no one would see her.

The whole occasion had been a tremendous success. David had never appeared so well. She had helped him to write all of his introductions for the other speakers at the banquet. They were amusing in themselves; but what made them seem really hilarious was David's air of preternatural gravity as he spoke them. He had the true temperament of the entertainer. At home, when a joke occurred to him quite spontaneously, he laughed at his own unexpected inspiration until he grew apoplectically red. But in public there was a thoughtful, almost a sad, solemnity about him that made everything he said seem twice as funny.

She loved him on the platform. When he uncoiled his great length and straightened to his full height, he was a commanding figure. From the atmosphere of a room crowded with expectant people, he drew in something that never failed to stimulate him to be his brilliant best. All his finest qualities of compassion and insight played over his face. He became a superior version of himself, one from which all his human inadequacies had been removed.

Tonight he had looked distinguished. The air of gravity and thoughtfulness made him look almost like a man of learning. Even the fact that his hair had grown so thin added something to his appearance of intellectuality. After all, Socrates was bald, too. David had just as fine a brow to reveal.

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For once, he had managed to keep himself absolutely immaculate until he got to his feet. He looked so gleamingly radiant that Faith, sitting in the balcony, had leaned forward to make sure that she was seeing clearly. But when he began to speak the words that they had written together, she forgot his appearance and listened only to his voice. Every modulation had become familiar as David had repeated his introductions over and over to her. But in none of the rehearsals had he done so well.

Her own stuff had gone over very satisfactorily. Several of David's biggest laughs came from the jokes that she had added, particularly in the section dealing with the social follies of the season. But the whole plan, for this humorous survey of the year in Drummond, had been David's idea. He had chosen men to speak on the judicial follies, the legislative follies, the national follies, and coached them all. The whole banquet had been like a well-rehearsed stage entertainment with David in the rôle of the star.

Her reflections were interrupted by the sounds of women's voices. Faith wondered guiltily whether she ought to rise and show herself. But her head was no better. She did not want to have to be amiable to women whom she probably did not know. They might recognize her and expect her to talk about the banquet. It was too much of an effort, she decided. There could be no harm in her lying there quietly while the women came and went.

"You can say all you want to about political follies," Faith heard one of the women say. "But they haven't all been paid for yet. My husband's income was cut in half during the past year. And someone is going to pay for that. My husband isn't the sort of man to take that from anyone."

Faith shuddered with discomfort and irritation. This strident anger was obviously directed against David. This was probably the wife of one of the men who had been forced to give up the idea of having the city contracts made to please him. She had come to the banquet to ridicule David and his triumph had made her all the more severe. By hiding here in the corner, Faith had put herself in an absurd position. She would have liked to walk from the room giving the woman a scornful glance as she went.

But it was too late now. She could only continue to conceal herself.

"Oh, my dear . . . not in half. . . . You can't have been running your beautiful house on half what you ordinarily have."

The second woman's voice was light, fluttering and placative. The perfect sycophant, Faith thought . . . some meagre, pale and grotesquely animated creature, trying to be gay and worldly. Her voice sounded like that of a poor relation who owed a desperate allegiance to a benefactress. There is nothing, Faith thought bitterly, as tender as the sympathy which the poor retainer feels for the privations of the rich.

"I can show you my account books, Hazel, if you don't believe me," the first woman was going on. "You can't imagine what straits I've been put to in order to keep other people from knowing how we've been crippled financially. I can tell you I'm pretty tired of the whole business."

The conversation fell to a lower key so that Faith could not hear for a moment what was said. It seemed to her horribly important that she should know just what kind of attack was likely to be made on David and she strained her ears shamelessly.

"I had no idea he was that sort of man." The sycophant spoke out loud again with an air of anguished incredulity.

"Well, he is. And we're not the only people who are thoroughly angry about it. You should hear Mr. Langhorne talk about him. And when I think that, after all, he's nothing but a poor, Scotch immigrant. . . ."

Faith's hands closed convulsively in the pockets of her coat. To think that they would dare to use the very facts of his birth against him! As though there were something degraded about having been born of good parents in another country.

"No, he wasn't even born here," the jangling voice went on. "Whenever a man like that assumes to dictate to us, I think to myself: What did his forefathers ever sacrifice for this country?"

The fool, Faith thought. Did she really imagine that the sacrifices of her forefathers entitled her to run the country forever . . . run it into the ground with her cynicism and selfishness?

A long discussion between the two women about the sacrifices

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of their forefathers interrupted the attack on David. Their bland assumption of innate superiority was almost amusing. The strange processes of their minds seemed to Faith to have resulted in a confusion about the very meaning of the word which they used again and again with unctuous self-complacence. Each seemed to be under the delusion that she had had "four fathers." This striking multiplicity of parents apparently conferred upon the fortunate possessors of four fathers privileges four times greater than those of humbler folk.

But, after a moment, they returned to the subject of special interest.

"And do you know what I've heard? While he goes around preaching reform to everyone else, he's lining his own pockets out of city funds."

Even that lie wasn't to be left out of the account against David! As they manufactured evidence against him, the two women became increasingly sprightly and assured.

"Not really, my dear! When that comes out you shouldn't have any difficulty in defeating him for re-election."

"Oh, there won't be any difficulty about that. The evidence is right there before everyone's eyes. He's bought a mansion on the outskirts of town . . . a perfect castle in what my husband says is going to be the coming residential district. And where did he get the money for that? He had nothing before he was elected Mayor. Less than nothing. He was actually in debt. But right away he moves into one of the most expensive houses in this city. I guess that shows . . ."

It was almost funny. Their poor, rambling, run-down old house, a mansion! The only things that were nice about it were the site and the fact that there was open country all about it. It was land that no one else wanted a year ago. If it had increased in value that was no discredit to David. The whole thing bought with money he had worked so hard to give his mother over a period of twenty years! And the house wasn't even paid for. Mortgaged so heavily that it was a burden to carry it. Surely, it was ridiculous to believe that spite could make their way of

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life seem extravagant or luxurious. No one would be imposed upon by such lies.

The woman had evidently risen and walked nearer to where Faith lay. Her voice rang out more piercingly than ever as she continued.

"And there's more than that. His Honor the Mayor had better be pretty careful how he goes about antagonizing influential people. If he insists on assuming a holier-than-thou attitude, some pretty unpleasant things about his own personal life are likely to come out."

Don't let them say anything more! Dear God, I can't stand hearing anything more. . . . If she had dared, she would still have risen and walked from the room. But it might hurt David still more if these angry women knew that their conversation had been overheard.

The voice of the woman who had spoken first went on relentlessly. "I can't say anything more, Hazel. I'm pledged to secrecy. But if you remember the story about the death of that man, Ben Stanford, you may get an idea. Stanford was the Honorable Mr. David Fraser's close friend. At least they had been friends up to the night of Stanford's very sudden and very inadequately-explained death. If that investigation were to be re-opened, it might be very compromising indeed for anyone who knew Stanford as well as Mr. David Fraser did."

"Good heavens! I had no idea! Not the slightest in the world!"

"You must promise not to say a thing, Hazel. . . . If it came out too soon, it might spoil everything. . . ."

"Lottie . . . You know me better than that. I wouldn't say a word. But good heavens! Just think. And Mr. Fraser who's been pretending to be Galahad . . ."

"Yes, sir. That very Mr. Fraser. Come on, Hazel. Are you sure you have everything . . . ?"

Their voices were lost as they closed the door behind them.

Faith did not move. David! she thought. David darling, what have you done . . . !

Then suddenly her fear brought her to her feet. Her head throbbed maddeningly. It was clear enough that he had kept

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something from her. He would let her work on his speeches. Again and again he had told her that he did nothing without her advice. Yet about some crisis that threatened her and the children as much as it threatened him, he had kept her ignorant. It wasn't fair.

Fear hardened her against him. When he came at last to take her home she was so angry that she did not trust herself to speak.

She sat silent during the ride home on the streetcar. David tried nervously to draw her into conversation. He was perplexed and worried. Faith knew that she was torturing him. But she felt a wild exultation in her ability to hurt him. He had hurt her often. He had no right to escape from all punishment himself.

Still he persisted. "We got a great laugh on your statistics about the miles of smilax used at weddings during the season of 1899. Did you notice?"

She turned toward him gravely and held his eyes, until they dropped before her, in the discomfort of uncertainty.

"Yes, David, a big laugh. That's the important thing. Always to get a big laugh."

He looked up questioningly. Meeting only the enigma of her ironic smile, his eyes dropped once more. He fingered the crease of his trousers as though his confusion of mind were trying to find a simple problem on which to fix itself. He ran his thumb along the crease, seeming to marvel that, at the end of a long evening, it should still be there.

It was cruel to deny him any satisfaction in his triumph. She longed to forget her fear and her annoyance. If she could only give him the praise he wanted; laugh with him for an hour when they were at home in bed; and then drift off, in the midst of a sentence, into sleep! But until she knew what he had done to make these spiteful women so happy, she could not talk about anything else. Fear scurried back and forth through her thoughts, stirring up panic and indignation. . . . Fear scurries like a rat in a trap, she thought.

Usually when they walked home together up the hill, David took her elbow and then let his hand close over hers. Tonight

she drew away and walked a few feet ahead of him. But when the door of the house closed them in, he caught at her wrists.

"Faith," he said, "for God's sake tell me what's the matter. Did you know, darling, that you have an almost uncanny power to make other people feel exactly as you do? When you're gay, this whole house becomes gay. When you're angry, I can feel rage hanging like something palpable in the atmosphere. Don't use your power ruthlessly. At least tell me why you're angry."

It was clear that he had thought up his little speech as they walked up the hill. There was a glib confidence to his manner that irritated her. The platform manner, being worked hard! He still was a little confident, drawing nourishment for his ego from the evening's success. But for her there could be no confidence because David lived part of his life away from her and kept that part secret.

She shouted at him trying to pierce his confidence, trying to destroy it with the sharpest words that she could find.

"Good God! I'm ruthless. I use my power indiscriminately. I suppose I'm disloyal, too. And debauched! And a liar! Tell me I'm the one that knew Ben Stanford. I was the one who was there when he died. I'm the one who has a secret about what killed him."

His hands tightened on her wrists. David was angry, at last, and fearful, too. The violence of the scene was intoxicating. Faith felt a wild desire to make it as violent as possible.

"That's right. Break my wrists for mentioning something unpleasant. The truth is the last thing you ever want to hear."

David dropped his hold upon her so abruptly that, as she pulled away from him, she lost her balance and stumbled against the wall. She made the most of that, too, looking at him reproachfully as though he had been deliberately rough. A part of her stood aside, criticizing these flamboyant histrionics, rebuking them. But the impulse to put him wholly in the wrong had got beyond control. She leaned against the wall breathing heavily.

"Who told you something about Ben Stanford?" David demanded. "What was said?"

"Why should I tell you who it was? Apparently everyone knows

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but me. I'm the only one who is kept in ignorance of what you do."

He came toward her. The touch of his hands on her shoulders made her want to cry, to turn toward him. But a wilful determination to suffer, and to make him suffer as long as possible, drove her from him. She ran into the living room, dropping her coat as she went. Before the fireplace she paced back and forth, flinging at him every accusation which she could snatch out of her whirling mood of resentment.

. . . He had lied to her always and betrayed her always. On their wedding trip she had cried all the way to Chicago. When Nina was born he had not been with her. She had been willing to work, but he had lost one job after another and made her lose her own, as well. At every crisis in their lives, he had failed her, failed her utterly and with conscious cynicism. . . .

She heard her voice becoming louder and louder, twisting facts so that they were hardly recognizable as the truth. Even while she shouted, a quiet counsellor in her mind kept repeating: It isn't true. You don't tell it as it was. . . . But the part of her to which she had given her vitality and her fatal fluency cried down every protest. The reasonable self looked on, stricken and appalled, as though at a scene in a play. The actress was in command. She knew her rôle and was determined to play it to the end.

She stood directly before him at last, measuring her height against his, trying to make it seem the greater.

"And now you've managed to do something so bad that it makes you the easy victim of any spiteful woman who chooses to repeat the story."

She saw that he was no longer defiant. There was no anger in him and no aggressiveness to keep the contest lively. Her own strength was gone. She was ready at last to hear what he wanted to say. But she still faced him angrily unable to admit that she longed to hear him and was ready to forgive anything at all.

When he spoke it was to say exactly what she wished to hear.

"Faith, I've wanted to tell you for such a long time. It made me feel alone to have something that I couldn't say to you."

She continued to face him without an encouraging word.

"To have something left unsaid . . . however trivial," David stumbled on, trying to woo her to sympathy before he began his recital. "Maybe it's because I've always regarded you as my confessor, or maybe it's just because I'm a garrulous old codger, as you always say. . . ."

His effort to break down her resistance by quoting one of their jokes touched her genuinely. She took his hand.

When he had told her about watching Ben Stanford die, she could not manage to make herself feel shocked. It had nothing to do with David, really. He had merely been at the party, along with half the prominent men in Drummond. Only the most vicious spite could make it seem more compromising to David than to the others. She had never liked Ben Stanford. Nothing about his life or his death interested her deeply. Her only emotion was one of relief that David should actually have been so little involved. Out of her relief welled a sympathy for David. It was pathetic that he should have protected her from knowing something that it gave her so little pain to know.

"Poor David," she said. "Poor darling!"

"Don't feel sorry for me. I'm happy. I feel like a juvenile delinquent who has just escaped being sent to reform school."

"I do feel sorry for you. But we'll forget it. Mr. Langhorne can't possibly make it seem like a scandal for you to have been there when he was a guest himself."

David shrugged his shoulders. "The human ego has an extraordinary gift for renewing itself after a wound. Langhorne has probably persuaded himself that he went to Ben's party as one, appointed by God, to see what the rascals were up to. While I went in my natural rôle as libertine."

"You were already that much of a libertine when he put you in office."

"Let's not think about it, darling. The whole business is too mystical for people with simple minds like ours. The trouble is that neither of us ever had the foresight to get himself appointed by God to some easy and agreeable lifework, such as bullying everyone in Drummond into submission."

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Curiosity began to stir at the back of her mind.

"David, just when was that party? I can't remember."

He did not answer immediately. Then, as he straightened up and surrendered luxuriously to a great yawn, he said: "I don't remember either. It was during that bad time when I was trying to forget what a failure I was."

"But I was carrying Nina. You remember. There weren't many times that you left me during all those months. Not more than two or three. I remember one time. But you weren't with Ben Stanford then. I can't think when it could have been. . . ."

She stopped short as she realized with appalling certainty that she knew just when the party had taken place.

"Unless it was . . . David, it couldn't have been the night Nina was born!"

His stricken look confessed that he, too, remembered. Instantly all pity, all warmth, all desire to forgive him were gone. She paced the floor again, striking out at him with accusations.

"You left me knowing that the baby would be born at any minute. You lied about how long you expected to be gone. You told no one where you were going so that you couldn't be interrupted at your party. While my very life was being torn out of me, you were getting drunk with your favorite criminals. It was no responsibility of yours that I was so sick. Oh, no, let no responsibility ever rest on David Fraser's broad shoulders. Every burden that belongs to him is shouldered off onto his wife. To be sure, she's small and frail and already half-dead with anxiety. But don't think of that. Forget her. Don't look at the unpleasant facts of her grief and her disappointment and her sickness. Go off with men who will amuse you and distract you from the disagreeable memory of your wife, lying in bed undernourished because you have not been able to support her, waiting for a child that will nearly kill her, being born. God-in-heaven, I call you to witness the sweet, affecting picture of this blameless man, sitting here in all docility and meekness, while a shrewish wife berates him. And for what? Why, for nothing at all. Simple little peccadilloes like lying and cheating and neglecting a wife who has done nothing but serve him. Oh, God, David, it's funny. Let's

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have a big laugh together. That's what you want more than anything in the world. Well, why don't you laugh? Why do you look so solemn? There's nothing to be solemn about. Let's laugh . . . laugh. . . ."

The sound of her own hysterical pretense to amusement shocked her. Still the laughter rose higher and higher until it ended in a sob. . . . She had quarreled with David violently and noisily in the house where she had meant that they were to lead the excellent life. She had betrayed the excellent life itself. . . .

She let David take her in his arms.

IV

(March, 1900)

"MARGARET, will you help me fold up the kindergarten table?"

She must keep busy, Faith told herself. Otherwise she would go crazy waiting for news of the re-count. David had been defeated by such a tiny margin. There was still a chance that he might get in. He must get in, if only to keep up his own morale. It would be the end of David if he were thrown out of office after making such a fine record. He would feel that he could never try again. It would be less hard on her. She was used to starting all over again when things were smashed to pieces beneath her. But David had made the greatest effort of his life when he was in the Mayor's chair. If he were defeated, he could never again be able to fight for a place in the world. He would be too disheartened. They simply must find that the re-count put him ahead! They must!

The squealing voices of the twenty children, looking for mufflers and rubbers in the hall, went through her like twenty knives.

"They'll be gone in a moment," Margaret said soothingly. "You shouldn't have tried to have kindergarten today when you're so nervous."

"I shouldn't have tried to have it at all. David thought that if we organized a successful one in our own home, the School Board could be made to see that it was feasible to introduce kindergartens into the public schools. We did manage to make it attractive enough to parents so that all the clubs are demanding an appropriation. Now they'll take that, like every other good thing that David has managed to do, and either discard it, or deny him the credit of having started it."

Margaret put an arm around Faith's shoulders. "I just don't believe David will really be defeated. He did too well."

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"Yes. That's just it. He did too well."

"You can't tell me that people in Drummond don't want an honest Mayor."

"They don't seem to be clamoring very eagerly for one, do they?"

Margaret flushed and drew away. "Well, tell me I lie."

It was impossible not to smile. There was Margaret's old formula for defending her prejudiced, stubbornly-held opinions. She had not given it up after all these years. But there was no real fire or animation in Margaret's protest. She did not really care about opinions any more. Poe Simpson had stifled all her combativeness. The desire to defend her views was an impulse which only old family association could rouse. There was no fire in it really. Faith felt drawn to Margaret by the link of disappointment. Each of them had had to come to some sort of agreement with the disheartening facts of existence. Margaret had made it by renouncing all of her values. She herself would do it, Faith supposed, by creating a new set of values out of nothing at all. But perhaps Margaret's way was better. There was a kind of tragic beauty to her almost complete passivity.

"I'm afraid I do tell you you lie, Margaret. You say that David can't have been defeated simply to try to keep up my courage. But I know better because I've watched the whole campaign. They've been cruel to David . . . cruel and ruthless."

No, those words were not strong enough for what they had done, she told herself. The hints against his honesty had been bad enough. Much harder to forgive were the insinuations about his part in Ben Stanford's death. It had been necessary, in the end, to take affidavits from a dozen men who had been present at the party to make it clear to the public that David had been simply an astonished and appalled onlooker, like Mr. Langhorne himself. And then, just at the moment when the weakness of those two cases against him had become apparent to everyone, the angle of attack had shifted again. There was simply an indulgent and dismissive attitude toward his whole effort at reform. David became a good fellow once more, a very fine fellow indeed. But as an executive, as a public leader, simply absurd. What had

he ever been, really, but a public entertainer? He ought to stick to a job about which he knew something instead of meddling in politics.

But the doubts that they had spread about him had had their effect. Mr. Langhorne could dismiss him from the City Hall with a magnificent air of magnanimity because the feeble-minded element among the voters had already had their minds sufficiently confused. Now they had put Norris back into office, rehabilitated at David's expense. The wise old men could say to themselves that they had tried reform under the only kind of man available. The whole experiment had ended dismally with a faint odor of scandal hanging over the administration. Better to cling to an experienced man who had been disciplined out of his worst traits by being out of office for a term.

David's enemies could afford to be indulgent. They had come out of the ordeal without being permanently injured. Their way of life could be restored now. The only one who had been hurt fundamentally was David himself. That was a very insignificant casualty in so great a triumph.

But as she tried to argue herself into believing that it was all over, Faith found that hope had not been really driven from her mind. Her ear kept straining to hear the telephone bell. The re-count would be completed soon. Perhaps David would call her to say that some deliberate mistake had been caught. The people that had worked so hard to defeat him would be capable of falsifying the returns. It was possible. They might discover such an error. David might go back, after all. Oh, he must! . . . He must!

The box of kindergarten equipment slipped from her hands. Red, green and blue blocks tumbled out over the floor. Margaret knelt beside Faith to pick them up.

"All these things must have cost a tremendous lot, Faith."

"They did."

Resentment pinched again at her mind. David had urged her to start the kindergarten as a disinterested gesture to stir interest in this service to children. And what reward had all his conscientiousness brought them? Nothing but that the community took

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everything from them, even the ability to earn a living for their own children.

The clamor in the hall rose to a higher pitch. Above it all, Faith could distinguish Nina's voice angrily ordering the other children about.

No, her motive in starting the kindergarten had not been so completely disinterested, she confessed to herself. It had seemed like the only possible cure of Nina's strange waywardness. Nina would not play with other children, not even with the little Veblens. She could not adapt herself to the idea that there were rights beside her own. Nina wanted her own way at every moment. But it was never quite the same way two minutes in succession. There was a passion of assertiveness about her, but the assertiveness took no understandable form. Her tantrums revealed a demon of energy, but the energy was both undisciplined and undisciplinable. It seemed to have no direction at all.

Faith had hoped that the example, in kindergarten, of how other children learned to subject the impulse of the moment to control, to the regulations of a game, might make Nina happier and easier to guide. But, so far, the child was simply the terror of the kindergarten, more tiring to her own mother than all the rest of the squirming mass of humanity taken together.

As she thought of Nina a sigh broke from her lips. Margaret was immediately beside her again.

"Faith, please don't worry so. You'll bring on one of your headaches."

It was curious! Her head had been aching all the while. She had been too preoccupied with immediate problems even to notice it. She wondered if the rest of her life would be spent trying grotesquely to solve the insoluble and expressing her inadequacy in great, formidable sighs. The sound had been so loud that it had startled herself almost as much as it had startled Margaret. It had been a huge, granite tombstone of a sigh. She smiled at the thought. Then immediately the wayward impulse of amusement died. That was too appallingly appropriate a figure of speech. Under that sigh she had buried all her hopes for Nina. The child was queer. There was no escaping that conclusion.

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"You'll feel better when you've had lunch. A nice cup of tea. . . ."

Oh, yes, a nice cup of tea! That would solve everything. Faith wondered idly if it really was the only comfort Margaret had. Probably. There was nothing that she could do with Poe Simpson. He did not even want a good life. David was not like that, thank heaven. Somehow, he would help her to create a good life for themselves in this house. They'd close the doors on the rest of the world that they had tried, with idiotic eagerness, to serve. Within in these walls, they'd build something. . . .

Only how were they to begin! They had to begin with Nina and Nina had already created a completely baffling set of problems. Everyone in the household lived under the shadow of her strange wilfulness. Poor, placid little Judith was thrown into eclipse. She was apt to be forgotten for a whole day at a time while the spectacular crises of Nina's existence claimed everyone's attention. The kindergarten had been intended, partly, to provide some sort of wholesome background for Judith. But the difficulty remained unsolved. Nina dominated Judith; told her what she must do and what she must not; took away from her blocks, paper-mats, anything she wanted. It was impossible to foresee every difficulty. Nina's piercing voice claimed attention constantly. There were not enough hours in the day to allow for individual attention to Judith. The monstrous demands of Nina pushed Judith's needs into the discard.

If it were not for the baby, Faith would have been unbearably burdened with a sense of failure in her motherhood. But Joel was always as gentle as the little girl was violent. He was going to look like the Winchesters. Oh, yes, the baby was a real comfort. She had that much to be thankful for.

The children came into the room, with Nina in the lead. Judith was carrying the baby.

"I want my lunch," Nina announced. "And I don't want any of those old carrots."

"Darling, you'll eat what Mother thinks is good for you."

"Let Judy eat my carrots. She doesn't care. She'll eat them."

"We're not going to say anything more about it. We're all going to eat just what is put before us."

A look of inspiration brightened Nina's dark eyes. They narrowed to little slits through which a gleam of preternatural shrewdness escaped.

"Mamma, I think I'll save my carrots for Christmas. It's so nice to have something special for Christmas. I'll just leave my carrots in my bowl and tell Mary to put them away for me . . . Mamma . . ."

Faith took the baby from Judith. The chubby contour of his cheek seemed to fit into the curve of her neck as though it belonged there. She loved the feeling of his body close to her own. Judith reached up and took her mother's hand. They were beautiful children, these two, with their golden hair and their deep blue eyes. Faith felt protected to have them so close to her. It was as though she and Judith and Joel had come together instinctively to present a unified resistance to Nina's attack. The older little girl stood, baffled for a moment, by the incredible fact that her demands and persuasions were being ignored. A dark threat to the peace of the whole household seemed to be embodied in that wiry, stubborn small figure.

Nina began pulling at Faith's skirt. "Mamma, pay attention to me . . . Mamma . . ."

Suddenly all resistance was gone out of her. "Oh, Nina, stop it, stop it, stop it." With each repetition of the words her voice grew louder. But she couldn't help it. She was at the end of her patience. "Can't you see that Mamma's half-crazy with worry and unhappiness? Can't you have a little mercy . . .?"

The baby began to cry in her arms. She pulled him close and tried to comfort him by the pressure of her cheek against his. But she had begun to cry herself. In a moment Judith would begin, too. It was horrible to have Margaret see this. But she couldn't stop. It was too horrible to have to have a scene with Nina now!

While she stood in the midst of her tormented family, the telephone began to ring. It sobered her instantly.

"Margaret, would you answer it? That is probably David's call."

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She put the baby on the floor and marshaled all three children toward the kitchen door.

"You're not to bother Mother any more. Do you understand that? Mary will give you your lunch in the kitchen and Mother doesn't want to hear a word of quarreling. . . . Not a sound. You don't know what's happening to Father. If you knew you might try to be a little considerate. In any case, you're to be good and not make a sound while you're eating your lunch."

The intensity of her voice had evidently frightened them. They ran before her, even Joel, glad to escape.

Faith followed Margaret into the hall.

"Yes, David, I'll tell her. I won't let her worry. I'll take her over to see Mrs. Veblen. I'm so terribly, terribly sorry."

Margaret hung up the receiver and turned.

"Oh," she said, "I didn't know you were there."

"I just put the children in the kitchen. Mary can take care of them."

"Faith, I'm afraid . . ."

"Oh, I know. . . . I know. . . ."

"Now, darling, David said I wasn't to let you worry."

Oh, no, why should she worry? They had no money. David had no job. T. K. Farnum had fought him bitterly through the campaign for re-election. David couldn't go back to the Record even if Mr. Farnum would have him. She wouldn't allow him to humiliate himself that way. It would be like that other time when David had tried to sell insurance. They would get on each other's nerves. They would quarrel. They had quarreled so bitterly and so frankly since that dreadful night after the banquet at the Commercial Club.

The excellent life! . . . If you worked hard and believed in honesty and high ideals you got the excellent life? Well, no, not quite. Poverty and squalor and crazing anxiety, rather! That was what she and David would have again and always . . . always . . . always.

She felt dizzy and reached out toward Margaret. Not in time, she was tumbling through space . . . into peace . . . into forgetfulness.

V

(January, 1901)

DAVID came running down the stairs to meet her as she shut the door against the winter wind through which she had been struggling for an hour.

"Where did you go?" he asked anxiously, helping her out of her coat. "I've worried about your being out so long in this sub-zero weather."

"Well, where do you think that woman would take me? I've been way out to the dying place and I almost didn't come back." Faith stood over the register in the front hall, enjoying the warmth of the air as it poured up beneath her billowing skirts. "Was there any mail?"

"Yes, a check for five dollars from Puck. They accepted your sketch called *The New Word*. You remember. That was the one about Mrs. Veblen's discovery of the word 'banal'."

"Good heavens, darling, I remember it all too well. I lie awake half the night thinking of what will happen to me if Mrs. Veblen ever finds out the use we've both been making of her."

"Don't worry. She won't find out. She would never bring herself to read anything as frivolous as Judge or Puck. If she hasn't got another new word by this time, she'd probably say that our humor is very banal."

"For her own sake, David, let alone mine, I ought never to go out walking with her again. She always gives me a new idea for a skit. Today she was telling me very solemnly that all this business of being President of the Women's Club and of the Suffrage Alliance is foreign to her essential nature. She wishes she didn't have to go so much into society. What she longs to be is simply the Lady of the Fireside. I said to her: 'Yes, Mrs. Veblen, but whose fireside?'"

David laughed. "Yes, I can see that that sketch will get itself

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written in a hurry. *The Fireside Lady*. That will look well in print." He pulled the check out of his pocket and handed it to her. "That puts your score for the month ahead of mine."

She held his hand for a moment as she took the check. It was nice of him to say that, though he must know that it was not true. His article for the *North American Review* and the lecture, for which the Robert Burns Club had paid him thirty dollars, were the things that were carrying them. He pretended to be confused about her share in their free-lance work in the hope of confusing her. But the truth was that she had never earned more than fifty or seventy-five dollars in a month. Sometimes David did not earn any more than that, but in general the greater success had been his. Her difficulty was that she worried too much. She knew that it minimized her ability to work. But at quite regular intervals, the rhythm of the anxiety that vibrated constantly at the back of her head grew faster and faster until she could endure it no longer. The crisis always came with a sick headache which lasted two whole days. During that entire time she was unable to work and it seriously impaired her productivity.

David seemed not to worry. Or rather his worry was spread thin through the entire time. He was never free of the nervous symptoms that had begun to show themselves while he was in office. They both had to accept with an air of comic indifference, the distressing signs of his chronic discomfort.

With a pretense to high spirits which had become habitual, Faith smoothed out the check against her hand.

"David, what shall we do with five whole dollars?"

"I suggest that we hang it high above the door and let the creditors bay for it. Mr. Stanley is developing a very pretty talent for baying. It's a very attractive addition to a grocer's gifts. He told me, when I was in the store the other day, that he used to be considered quite a singer. I asked him what his voice was. He seemed puzzled at first about what I meant. Then a great light broke, and he answered: 'Tenor, baritone and yodel.'"

"Darling, that ought to go in the book. You're likely to forget it."

Their ideas for sketches and articles were hoarded in an old

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ledger. It lay on top of the shelf that held the Encyclopedia Britannica. The page was divided into two sections. David made his entries on one side and Faith on the other. Either of them was privileged to raid this central storehouse for a joke or a figure of speech. When one such inspiration had been used in an article, a star was put after the entry. The principle had been laid down that once a joke had been used it became outlawed for five years. But there were instances in which two, or even three, stars appeared after a single quip.

There had been many compensations to this strange, precarious life. It was pleasant to have David near her all the time. Nor was it as unpleasant as they had feared it might be to have few intimates. Their difficulties had abruptly ended the possibility of seeing other people. You could not very well entertain at dinner and serve oatmeal to your guests. Yet that was what Faith gave her family at three meals a day when the money ran short. Only people like the Veblens climbed the barriers of poverty and came regularly to see them, without invitation.

But there was a kind of satisfaction in being so alone. Within these four walls they had created a life that no one could destroy. They could count at least upon loyalty from each other. Every feature of their existence was something that they themselves had invented. They were busy and it was the kind of busyness that depended on the whim of no outsider. They were even gay and it was a gaiety that required no stimulation except what they gave each other.

"When you have a moment I'd like you to read what I've done this afternoon."

David put a sheet of paper into her hands. He was like a child in his impatience to show his work. What he hoped was that she would read it now. Well, dinner could wait. She would not put him off.

"Light the gas, David. Let's go over it right away."

"I got bogged down in the piece about Bryan, and decided to dash off a sketch. Those things often sell when the ambitious articles don't."

With the warm air still comforting her chilled ankles, she began

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to read. David, she saw, had made a little essay of the story that Mr. Baxter had told them about meeting Judith on the street.

"I sometimes wonder," the page began, "why the earnest students of child life seem to learn so little about the way in which children's minds really work. Behind the lovely, unintimidated gravity of a little girl's face, intense dramas are being enacted which, if we took the trouble to understand them, would clarify many of the problems of non-cooperation among our younger citizens.

"A friend tells me that his daily walk to the streetcar leads him past a public school where one day he found his path resolutely blocked by a shrewd-looking small person. She stood with her hands thrust into a muff, looking somehow the very picture of determination. He stopped, as the little girl meant to make sure that he should, and she said briskly:

"'Do you think they'll kill me in there?'

"My friend saw that she meant the kindergarten room and was properly shocked at such a suggestion. 'Why should they do anything like that?' he asked. 'Kindergarten is meant for little girls.' The child continued to look shrewd and only commented:

"'I think they'll bite my head off in there.'

"Summoning all of his knowledge of child psychology, my friend decided that the child was late for kindergarten, that she had been rebuked for being late before, and was afraid of another scolding. He asked if that was the case. The little girl said nothing. He tried another tack. Would she like to be escorted into the school? At that, she took his hand and went climbing eagerly up the steps.

"Feeling like the Chevalier Bayard himself, my friend allowed himself to be led on by his lady in distress. They entered the schoolroom. The kindergarten teacher looked nice: young and sympathetic. It was difficult to imagine her being severe. But when the circumstances had been explained, the teacher shook her head.

"'Oh, no,' she said, 'this is an old case. She's only four years old, not ready for kindergarten by a year. But every day she has some new dodge for getting in here.'

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"She knelt patiently on the floor. 'Darling,' she said, 'you know you're not supposed to come to kindergarten. Please, please, won't you go home and wait until next September?'"

"A minor crisis was immediately precipitated. The young woman whose knight-errant my friend had undertaken to be was in tears. 'I don't see why I can't stay here,' she protested heart-breakingly, 'if all these children can.'"

"The whole kindergarten assembled. 'Aw, let her stay,' some virile young men urged. It was no place for the Chevalier Bayard. He ducked.

"But dramas like these tend to explain what we sometimes call stubbornness in very active young people."

Faith reached into David's pocket for his pencil and made a correction in punctuation.

"It's really very touching," she said.

She wondered if he had ever actually hoped to sell his sketch at all. It was, of course, intended as a comment on their difference of opinion about the discipline of Judith. But he did not understand Judith clearly. When she had had the kindergarten in her own home, Judith had been sluggishly indifferent to it. Now she managed to make herself seem a pathetic figure because she was excluded from it.

David had missed the real drama. He was responsible for the fact that there were kindergartens in the public schools. But no one remembered or cared about that. Mr. Baxter had told the story, forgetting that it might have overtones of irony for David and herself.

Of course, David would never think of such a thing. He had an amazing store of patience and good-will.

"You're a good man, David," she said aloud.

He drew her close, sighing deeply. "I wish that were true."

"But it is true." She drew back against the circle of his arm so that she could face him. "Your sketch made me think about the kindergartens and how Drummond happens to have them. No, let me go on. I'm not going to say anything bitter. I'm glad we're out of politics. I'm glad we live as we do. Nothing is more important than working together and sharing every minute of

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the day. There are so many people who have no intimacy at all. Their lives are just tedious repetitions, day after day, of the same dull jobs. People may feel sorry for us. But I don't. Right here within these four walls, we have so much . . . so much."

His arms went tighter around her. She knew what that possessive gesture meant. He had repeated it, many times, with a patient, dumb hopefulness. But she could not let him make love to her. It was too dangerous. They must not have a child. She had said too much in her desire to assure David of the only love she could offer. The pathetic result had been to stir a need that she could satisfy.

Her need, too! She was no longer afraid to admit that to herself. But she was afraid, nonetheless, to yield to it. If she were pregnant, now, there would be bills for doctors. She would have to give herself special care. It was not as though she were an ignorant woman who could plunge into such an adventure recklessly and forget all responsibility toward the child. She would need feeding of a kind that their budget simply would not allow.

That would be only the beginning of the new exactions that a child would make. It would be impossible to continue her present program: managing the house, caring for the three children that they had already; and writing for four hours a day. No, it was out of the question.

She had argued it all out with herself many times. Possibly she would not become pregnant. But how could she hope for immunity at thirty? And there would always be the fear hanging over them. David, in his desperate moments, thought he did not care. But he did. He cared quite as intensely as she did herself. This was something that they must deny themselves for his sake, as much as hers.

It must sound ironic to him when she talked bravely about sharing. Fear had driven them apart. It had even driven Faith into a room by herself. He must think that she did not trust him. There ought to be some way of telling him that it was her own self that she did not trust.

She pulled away from his arms as though she had just remembered one of the pressing duties that forever drove her.

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"David, we've stood here talking for fifteen minutes. Where are the children? We've left them all alone."

She ran up the stairs, three at a time, leaving him alone in the hallway.

When she opened the door of the children's playroom, she saw that it was quite time that someone had remembered them. Judith stood over the baby's pen with a pot of library paste in her hands rubbing the soft white stuff into Joel's head.

"Judith, what in the world are you doing?" she cried and snatched the child into her arms.

The little girl's bland blue eyes beamed with satisfaction.

"I was giving the baby a shampoo. You gave Nina and me a shampoo yesterday. I'm giving the baby his shampoo today."

"But, darling, not with paste. Why do you want to make work for Mother when she has so many things to do? Now I shall have to wash the baby's hair when I ought to be getting dinner. Judy, I should think you'd want to cooperate. . . ." She paused, exasperated at her own inability to remember that she must translate her thoughts into the child's idiom. "I mean, can't you ever be a help instead of a nuisance?"

The little blue eyes took on the sullen expression behind which Judith hid whenever she met disapproval. "I was helping." She pointed at the baby's head. "It looks like soap."

"But, darling, it isn't soap. Now I shall have to . . . No, Joel . . . No, son. Not in your mouth."

The baby crowing with delight had rubbed his fat fingers into his hair and then drawn them across his face. Faith put Judith down and caught the baby into her arms.

"Nina," she called to the other little girl playing in the corner of the nursery with her paper dolls, "run downstairs and ask Father to heat a dishpan of water."

"I don't have to, Mother. I told that stupid Judy not to put paste on the baby's hair."

Faith glanced at the child with furious irritation. Nina had progressed out of her baby tricks of mischief making. But her development had led into a still more unintelligible phase. She tried constantly to discipline Judith and when she failed, as she

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usually did, she refused resolutely to have anything to do with a crisis created by the younger child. No argument would ever make her see that she was not being punished for Judith's fault by being sent for water to wash the baby's hair. If Faith were to insist on Nina's carrying out the order there would be a stormy scene.

"Oh, very well; Judy, you'll have to go."

But Judy having failed to win applause for the project of washing the baby's hair had had recourse to her favorite method of winning attention. She had flung herself on the couch and now she rolled her plump body over with a groan.

"I can't, Mother. I have such a stomach-ache."

So many stomach-aches! Faith thought desperately. Every time that Judith was asked to do anything in the household she announced in a loud, resolute voice that she had a stomach-ache. Almost invariably it turned out to be pure histrionism. But you could never be quite sure. Twice Faith had sent for Dr. Neill, fearing appendicitis. But Judith became miraculously cured the moment the doctor appeared and mentioned castor oil.

"All right . . . all right, Judy," she said impatiently, "Mother will attend to you in a minute. Lie right where you are till I come back. . . . Oh, darling, Mother's so sorry. . . ."

The baby had managed, at last, to get paste into his eyes. He cried lustily.

"Nina," Faith began again and then added crossly: "Oh, never mind." With the baby in her arms, she stepped to the head of the stairs. "David," she called, "will you heat a pan of water for me? And I'm afraid you'll have to start dinner. I'm in a terrible mess up here."

David would laugh. He must have heard her say that a hundred times. A hundred! . . . More nearly a thousand. She was always in a mess with Nina's unpredictable perversities and Judith's everlasting stomach-aches. The baby was the only one in the nursery who gave her no trouble.

Sitting on the bathroom floor, waiting for the hot water, she realized suddenly that she was tired enough to cry. It was all very well to assure yourself that within the walls of your house

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you had created an inviolable life. But that was simply whistling in the dark. None of them was really satisfied. Not David who longed for love and could not have it because the world managed to make love too expensive. Not the children who needed more attention than she could give. What was worse, they needed better food and had a right to it, too! And not even Faith herself was satisfied. She needed to be something better than a hard-driven combination of household slave and literary hack. If she should ever escape from this situation, she would make a life for herself that was gay and vivid and full of intellectual excitement. That was what she wanted. . . .

But there was no escape. She needn't look for one. It would go on like this for years and years and years.

"Oh, Joel," she whispered leaning over the baby, "perhaps you'll make up to Mother for all this. You must! I have to believe that you will."

VI

(April, 1904)

NAOMI WINCHESTER could not quite recall what it was that had excited her so much just before she fell asleep. Something unusual had happened. But there was nothing unusual about the room as she opened her eyes again. It looked just as it had during all the time that she had been in bed. She tried to remember how long she had been in bed, but she could not. The days melted into one another. There had been snow on the ground that morning when the doctor told her it would be better for her not to get up. And now there were green leaves showing on the branches outside the window. But she could not think how deep into winter the season had traveled before she fell ill, nor how long she had been watching the approach of spring from her bed. She did not really care. It was easier to be here, removed from the life of the household, protected from its conflicts and disappointments. Yes, it was easier just to rest and let Margaret come to see her when she would and the others, too, from time to time.

Of course . . . that was it! That was what had excited her. They had all been here, today. Kathie and Lovatt and the two little girls, Hortense and Eileen. . . . Faith and David, with Nina and Judith and little Joel. With Margaret's and Porter's Eunice and Dorothy that had made seven grandchildren. All of her grandchildren together. They had come in to see her, a few at a time, and later, as she fell asleep, she had heard their talk and laughter downstairs. Kathie's Eileen, who was so clever at the piano, had played for her, and, in the midst of the playing, she had fallen into that lovely sleep. She did not want really to come out of it now. She closed her eyes again so that Margaret, sitting there at the side of the bed, would think that she had gone back to sleep and not worry about getting her anything. There was nothing that

she wanted. She wondered idly if the grandchildren were all still in the house. But if she asked she might have to see them again. And she did not really want to see them. It was better just to think of all their faces. When they were actually in the room they knocked against the bed. It made her dizzy to remember the way little Joel had bounced back and forth across the floor. She had been glad to see him, but glad also to see him go. The only boy! So curious that she should have had only girls and that her daughters should have had only girls with the one exception of this last child of Faith's. He was a round, pretty child with very blond hair and very blue eyes. He looked healthy and already there was a suggestion that he would look like the Winchester side of the family. She was glad that he looked well and glad that he gave Faith so little worry. She had trouble enough with that strange Nina. But it was not easy to lie still and watch Joel bouncing about the room. She was relieved when they took him away. Still it had pleased her to hear him calling back in that curious deep voice of his.

She did not know what to make of the fact that they had all been there at once. It had never happened before. Faith had not brought her children very often. It was such a long trip on the streetcar. And then Faith was not as devoted as the other girls. She never had been. Like her father from the beginning: reserved and severe. Every day, she became more like him. Naomi often expected Faith to start scolding, as her father had done when he was not pleased with the way the money was spent. Faith never scolded, but always she seemed just about to begin. It was almost as bad as being scolded: waiting for the rebuke to come.

It grieved Naomi to think how little she had had in common with Faith in the whole course of her daughter's life. Faith had gone through troubles like the other girls. But she had never brought them to her mother. She had just sat alone until the bad time was over, as she had during those years just after David had been defeated for Mayor. That had gone on a long time. Naomi tried to remember how long. Her fingers caught at the sheet as she struggled with her perplexity. Oh, yes, Joel had just

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begun to walk when David was turned out of office. And now he was what? . . . Five, perhaps.

But things always came right for Faith. David was an important man again. It was a year since he had gone back to the Record, as editor, after that Mr. Farnum died. Faith had two maids now and Kathie none at all. It didn't seem fair. Faith seemed farther away from her family than ever before. She was cold and hard. Her troubles hadn't really affected her. She hardly looked older than when they had first come to Drummond. Anyone would have thought she was younger than Kathie, instead of older. It was her aloofness that kept her young.

Naomi felt a moment's bitterness as she thought of Kathie's tired face. Kathie, who had always been so high-spirited, who loved to play jokes on her friends and make them laugh! She had had a cruelly hard life. Her dear, dear Kathie who should have sat graciously at the head of a long mahogany table, entertaining important guests, the light of candles playing over her sweet face . . . poor Kathie had nothing. Faith was the only one of the Winchesters that people in Drummond knew. It was Porter's fault and Lovatt's fault that Margaret and Kathie were so neglected. Lovatt had no bad habits like Porter, of course. Kathie always knew where he was. He never disappeared for three days at a time and came home quarrelsome and abusive. Lovatt was just a sweet unfortunate fool. He bungled everything he touched and turned it into something nearly worthless. What grieved Naomi deeply to remember was that often when his touch was removed the business, that he had had to sell at a loss, began to prosper. The nursery that he had established in Chippewa had made his successor rich. But nothing could go right for dear little Kathie.

At least she had passed on her gifts to her daughters. Hortense drew very cleverly and Eileen was already a fine musician. At least Faith, with all her pride and her air of superiority, could not pretend that Nina and Judith were anything like as clever as Hortense and Eileen. Yet Nina and Judith were the ones that would get opportunities. Their father would always see to that. And Kathie would have to struggle to get any chance in life. for

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her little "girlies" now that their poor father was reduced to selling one thing or another from door to door.

Naomi was glad that she had not had to go to visit the Flemings recently. It grieved her to have to see how they lived. Kathie earned the rent of the rooms they occupied in the big Spence house by serving as a kind of companion to that feeble-minded Spence girl. It was desperately humiliating. It had made Kathie old, long, long before her time. And still she tried so hard to be gay and bright.

If only Naomi had her life to live over again, she would know how to protect Kathie and keep her from throwing herself away on a fool like Lovatt. She would urge her to go into some sort of work, as Faith had done. That was what had made it possible for Faith who had never been pretty or had anything like Kathie's charm, to marry an important man like David Fraser. Faith had had the only luck that came to any of her children. It was because she had been cold and selfish from the start . . . taking what she wanted . . . never assuming any share of the housework . . . going to work when she was so young. It wasn't quite ladylike. But it had helped her to climb to an important place in the community. Naomi was glad that neither of her other daughters had been willing to make themselves conspicuous as Faith had always done. But if life were to be lived over again, she would urge Kathie to develop her gifts. They were superior to Faith's gifts, really. Always so clever at drawing and wood-burning and things like that. She might have been a great artist.

It excited her to think of re-making Kathie's life. Then tears began to squeeze themselves wearily out of the corners of her eyes. It was too late, much too late. There was nothing that she could do now for Margaret and Kathie. They were both failures. It was partly because everything had always been done for Faith. If it had not been for that time when they had all been forced to spend the summer at Onondaga, just because Faith insisted, Kathie might have married Artie Holmes and been secure for her entire life.

It was so hard to understand . . . no, she couldn't understand at all. Faith had everything: prominence, friends. She and David

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went to big dinner parties. They went to the theater and to concerts. Margaret never went anywhere. She sat at home while Porter was across the street at the fire-station with his chair tipped back against the wall. Margaret was the pretty one, not Faith. Margaret should be going to parties. Instead she climbed up and downstairs all day, serving Porter hand and foot, even blacking his boots. She worked so hard that she did not have strength even to keep her house neat. The children dropped things and no one ever picked them up. Once a piece of paper had lain on the landing of the stairs for a week. Naomi had left it there deliberately to see how long the others in the house would walk over it without thinking to pick it up and dispose of it. A week, it had been there, before she finally let herself down on hands and knees to get it.

What was worst of all Margaret no longer loved her mother as she had in the old days. There were constant quarrels between Margaret and Porter, quarrels over his irregularity and his drunkenness and the things that he did that lawyers weren't supposed to do. Margaret never told her what they were. But she had overheard the two of them talking in their room. She knew there was something . . . something very bad. It grieved her to think about it. But when she tried to take Margaret's side, she could count only upon Margaret's turning against her.

Oh yes, she was glad to be out of it, safe here in her bed. There had been nothing for her to do for so long. When the lameness began, she had been forced to stop helping Margaret with the housework. When Faith gave up her work and the allowance to her mother ceased there was no money with which to go shopping. She had enjoyed buying pretty things for Margaret's daughters and Kathie's daughters. But all the little pleasures had stopped at once. It had grieved her. Still there was nothing to do but to adjust oneself to necessity.

The distant sounds of children's laughter broke in on her reflections. Yes, the grandchildren were all still here. She turned her head slowly to look out of the window and watch them play tag in the vacant lot next door. But by opening her eyes, she had betrayed herself to Margaret. The familiar routine of ques-

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tions began again. It was so tiring to have to answer them over and over.

"You had a nice little nap, didn't you, Mamma."

"Yes, dear . . . a nice nap."

"Do you feel better for it?"

"Yes, dear, much better."

"Shall I get you something?"

"No, thank you. There's nothing that I want."

"Shall I send one of the others to sit with you for a little while?"

"I don't need anyone to sit with me, Margaret."

"Of course you do, darling. We don't want you to be lonely for a minute."

It was hard to keep from smiling. Didn't Margaret realize how lonely she had been for years and years? She had no one left. The people with whom she should be growing old were far away. When she left Meadville, she had done it happily thinking that she was doing the best thing for Margaret and Kathie. She hadn't known then that she needed her friends.

But now she had lost Margaret and Kathie, too. She had no real share even in their troubles and their disappointments. She was altogether alone. Long, long since, she had ceased even to be grieved about it. That was the way life was. Everyone who lived a long time was bound, at last, to be lonely.

It bothered her a little to have Margaret's eyes fixed upon her demandingly. The worst thing about being sick was having to assure other people that you were hardly sick at all. She had said that she felt better so many times today that it would be impossible to say it again even to Kathie. If only they would leave her alone.

The inspiration came to her of trying to distract Margaret by asking how it had happened that all of the grandchildren had been brought at once. But she saw immediately that it was a mistake. Margaret bridled and was on the defensive exactly as she always was when Porter's name was mentioned.

"There was no reason for it at all, Mamma. Why should you

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think so?" she demanded almost crossly. "It's Sunday and they were all free and just happened to come."

She had always been able to tell when Margaret was lying. She had lied often in recent years, mostly about Porter. As her daughter lied earnestly, Naomi knew why the family had gathered together. It was because they thought that she was going to die. But they were wrong. She wouldn't die today. She was no nearer to dying than she had been for a long time. But probably she would die before Faith found it convenient to come again. This was her death-bed and the children had been brought to see her on it.

It was curious that young people should think it necessary to lie about death. Naomi had known for a long time that she would never get up from her bed again. It mattered very little . . . hardly at all. The things that she had loved were all taken from her. One at a time she had given them up: her house in Meadville, her supreme place in the affections of Margaret and of Kathie, her clothes and bits of jewelry, her ability to move quickly and keep a house neat, her hope that things would ever come right for her two dear daughters. And now here she lay, with empty hands and an empty heart. Why should they think that she minded dying?

She had had nothing that she wanted very much. It all began with the mistake of marrying Joel. He was stern and hard and he had killed in her the confidence that living could be a joy. She had passed on that confidence to Kathie and had had to live to see it killed in her as well. She had had to live to see Faith the very embodiment of all that she feared in Joel. She had seen Joel triumph in Faith and she had seen herself destroyed in Kathie.

Life was bitter, bitter. . . . Why should the young cling to it even when the old could see that they were already destroyed?

Outside in the yard, there were children, waiting to be destroyed. Some of them would be Joel again and some of them would be Naomi again. Only a fool would want to live to see them destroyed. She had seen enough to satisfy her. Yes, quite enough.

Naomi sighed.

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"Mamma, has it tired you too much to have all the children in the house at once?"

She roused herself to one more display of strength such as the strong exacted from the weak.

"No, dear, I feel much better for it . . . very much better."

VII

(November, 1905)

HAS Faith really found it this time? Dave asked himself as he studied his wife's face. Tonight, as she sat among her guests, she seemed serenely confident that this was indeed the excellent life. Animation always made her look handsome. It ironed away the lines of fatigue. The spiritual gravity of her expression was not lost when she assumed an air of smiling alertness. Instead its meaning became intensely personal as she turned from one of her guests to another, tacitly asking each for guidance.

On the two sides of the table were Faith's latest collection of intellectuals. Except for Mrs. Veblen and her daughter, Laura, they were all university people. The group had come together, first, as a kind of mass movement for the protection of young Professor Beverly Howard who had come to Drummond without friends. His shyness, on the occasion when he had presented a letter of introduction from John Haddon, had touched David as much as it had Faith. This was Beverly Howard's first teaching assignment away from his native Canada and Dave, remembering his own days as a student, did not doubt that he had suffered from certain rugged, mid-western ideas about the fitness of things. The name Beverly was almost certainly considered a crime against manhood exceeded in enormity only by the young professor's possession of an Oxford accent and a pair of popping china-blue eyes.

Indeed, Beverly had secretly confessed to Dave a depressing misadventure with his first class in freshman economics. He had intended to ask the students not to call him "Doctor" but simply "Mister." Assuming that the group was made up entirely of men, he had begun by saying: "Gentlemen, I wish you'd just call me . . ." But before he had reached the important word, he had seen that there was one girl among the students. The cir-

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cumstance had confused his mind and twisted his tongue, so that he had ended: ". . . just call me Sister."

"They've been most damnably obliging on that point," he added ruefully.

Faith had called together this group simply to give Beverly Howard a comfortable background. But already they were all intimates. Beverly had become the roommate of Waldo Parker and Roger Spence. The three young men had made themselves quite dashing figures by spending their savings on an automobile. Only Langhorne and a few of Drummond's *grands seigneurs* had automobiles. The appearance of one in front of the Fraser house had been the talk of the neighborhood for days. Nina, Judith and Joel were considered in school as creatures who had temporarily transported to a magical world when it became known that they had actually been for a ride, clear around the lake and back. Such enterprising young men were an enormous asset.

Irma Morgan, who sat beside Dave, was an inevitable addition to the circle because she was said to be resisting Waldo Parker's determined efforts to marry her. Dave felt that a Dean of Women should be given every possible opportunity to test her powers of resistance. It was her life work to train the young female to be extremely firm with the young male. Miss Morgan could not possibly get too much personal experience to support her theoretical knowledge of the technique of resistance.

Waldo Parker's voice rang out over the table in the provocative tone of one who is about to be witty and who invites the attention of those engaged in conversations which have begun to bore them.

"Roger, you say that the dress, worn by the woman in the supposed Rembrandt that Mr. Langhorne has acquired, is black. And I still want to know: what color, black? Your answer may help us to decide whether it's authentic or not."

Spence's pale, handsome face assumed an expression of hurt dignity.

"I decline to be challenged by a mere historian, Waldo. As a poet and an authority on Swinburne, I'm entitled to know all about nuance. You're invading my field."

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"But I don't see how you can take such a narrow, uncritical view. There are many colors, black. There's the clean, renunciatory black of a nun's garb. And then there's the frowzy black of the alpaca worn by all fallen women after they've stooped to folly."

"You ought to be ashamed of a statement like that, Waldo," Irma Morgan cut in. "You're deliberately confusing the issue by introducing adjectives. . . . Renunciatory . . . frowzy. . . . They're words that refer to literary concepts, or perhaps moral ones. You're trying to make them appear to have scientific validity."

To Dave it seemed as though Miss Morgan were deliberately adding, to her protest against Waldo's loose thinking, an over-tone of protest against his loose passions. The toss of her arrogant head implied that one could not possibly take precautions enough against the irresponsibility of men.

But Waldo Parker persisted, with the trained academician's weary and slightly truculent air, to try to pin those frivolous people down to a precise statement.

"I simply want to know what are the essential qualities of blackness so that we can distinguish between those colors that have it and those that don't."

"I want to know something much more important," Mrs. Veblen demanded. "You seem to know a great deal about fallen women. Since you're all so particular about academic authority, I think you should tell us on what authority you speak about them."

Laura Veblen seemed to feel released by her mother's audacity. Lazily, she brought her splendid Viking body to an upright position and spoke in a deep contralto drawl:

"As a social worker, I'd like to know if I'm to hold you accountable for all the unfortunate girls I have to advise every day."

Dave glanced at Faith to see whether or not this badinage had shocked her. But she was glancing with sparkling appreciativeness from one to another of her impudent guests. The blessing of the excellent life had been extended even to their mild ribaldry.

That was it. Faith felt that she had really found at last what she was looking for. She had tried living in the world and it

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had failed her. His defeat for Mayor had written finis to her interest in public affairs. Now she had retired into her own home and expected to create within it the superior existence that her idealism demanded. These people who came every Sunday evening, to read a page or two from a book and let it launch them upon a discussion which would last until one or two o'clock in the morning, were the kind of companions Faith had always wanted. Beverly Howard had once referred in public to these Sunday evening meetings as "Mrs. Fraser's salon." That had made it perfect for her. The kind of people whom she admired most came to her, sat at her table, considered her the presiding genius of a salon.

He did not know quite why he felt a little ironic about Faith's salon. It was not true that he felt excluded. On most of their evenings together he entered into the badinage and into the serious conversation, too. It was good talk. There was no speculation in which these people did not feel free to engage. There were none of the usual barriers to free exchange of ideas. They all trusted one another to speak with perfect taste and, when an important topic was under discussion, to handle it with a kind of deft flexibility of mind.

It could only be that he was a little jealous. Not jealous of the fact that it was Faith's salon rather than his own. No, it was because the salon was Faith's substitute for a close identification with himself. There could hardly be any doubt of that. Faith was unable to live without some strong belief in what she was doing. And she could not be content with any simple routine. There must be a significance behind it, an objective. She had to have the excellent life. For a long time his career had been the cause in which she invested herself. But she would never do that again. He had failed too many times. She was reasonable enough not to blame him. But their bitter quarrels at the time of his defeat had brought to a climax, and then to an abrupt end, her interest in his work. She had tried to make a shrine of the house. She had tried to live exclusively for the children. But those interests were far from being enough to satisfy her. When he had gone back to the Record, and their budget had become more

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flexible, Faith had launched herself upon a career of entertaining. These people were the first that really pleased her. Her worship of learning had taken a short cut to belated satisfaction. She hoped to acquire a liberal education over the coffee cups.

Roger Spence had assumed control of the conversation.

"I think poor Waldo is nothing but a dramatist *manqué*. He likes to turn the spotlight on himself by making startling and incredible statements. I dare you to risk your reputation as a scholar by repeating what you said to us at breakfast this morning."

Instantly Waldo Parker abandoned his rôle of intellectual pixie.

"I'm risking much less than you think. What I said was that I expect within ten years to see a war of major importance between England and Germany."

"But that's unthinkable," Faith protested. "Civilization wouldn't tolerate it."

"I agree with you that it's unthinkable." Beverly Howard seemed to address himself exclusively to Faith, but before he continued he had gathered up the whole table and subjected it to discipline exactly as though he were in the classroom. "But I put my faith not so much in civilization as in the working of economic law. The world has become a very small place. The inter-dependence of nations is such a delicate matter that no one will dare to upset trade by engaging in a major war." His glance returned to Faith. He smiled as though in apology for having been obliged to correct her.

"But, Beverly, it's precisely from an economic standpoint that I am speaking," Waldo insisted. "Germany is developing a tremendous fighting machine. Why? Because she's spoiling for a war. She wants to challenge England's right to the economic leadership of the world."

Mrs. Veblen made the indignant sound which always preceded one of her efforts to bring a discussion down to the level of common sense.

She is the eternal woman, Dave thought, trying to hold the world together with a few resolutely applied safety pins.

"You're leaving woman's influence out of account," she said,

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"If you men are such fools that you would go to war in defiance of what you know to be your own advantage, women won't support you in any such nonsense. We won't stand meekly by and see our sons killed. You can just make up your minds to that. I agree with Lady Fraser that some sort of common decency will prevent Waldo's war. . . . Call it civilization, if you like."

"We're not in a very fortunate position to talk back to university men," Faith warned Mrs. Veblen. "At least, I'm not because I have no education. As a barbarian I had no right to speak for civilization."

Beverly Howard's large eyes opened wider still. "Pure Greek, I assure you," he said.

A silence enveloped the whole room uncomfortably. Beverly's comment had been made with such an air of confiding intimacy that to have heard it seemed like eavesdropping. For a long moment the tension continued. Then Irma Morgan turned to David and spoke in a low tone obviously intended to indicate that she considered it time for the conversation to break up and become the property of smaller groups.

"I wish I could share Mrs. Veblen's confidence in women. The girls with whom I have to deal don't inspire me with any such trust in their insight."

I know, Dave thought; they will insist on kissing boys. Irma Morgan wants me to suggest a plan for getting that stopped so that we may begin to envisage the splendid possibility of race suicide.

But he could not really give her his attention. The passage between Beverly and Faith had seemed to him more significant than it could possibly have seemed to the others. Better even than Faith and Beverly, themselves, Dave knew what was going on in their minds. They were a little in love with each other.

It was perfectly clear. Beverly Howard had come like a special messenger from the world of John Haddon. He had claimed Faith's attention on the basis of an old loyalty. Old memories, old aspirations had been stirred. Through Beverly the link to John Haddon was strengthened. And this association had come at a moment when she felt dissociated from her immediate way of life.

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Faith's Puritan impulse would have made her fight any impulse to be sentimental about John Haddon's memory. But she had no armor against Beverly Howard. It seemed completely innocent to give a casual affection to Beverly.

And, of course, it was. Faith would have been outraged at the suggestion that the flattering air of reverence she gave Beverly was a form of flirtation. But all of her feminine grace was expended upon the deliberate effort to assure him that he was a superior creature to whom she looked for leadership as she made her bewildered, unenlightened way, seeking the things that were beautiful and true and good.

Beverly Howard would have to be something less than a normal man not to respond to it. He had no notion of what was happening to him, no more than Faith herself. In an atmosphere of intense intellectual communion about ideas, they were being drawn together. Beverly was ten years younger than Faith: twenty-five to her thirty-five. But he was obviously the sort of young man who wanted a large element of the maternal in any relationship with a woman. The gratitude with which he clung to Faith showed that. If he could dominate her intellectually and be dominated by her in all other particulars the situation would be bound to seem to him piquant. Presently, he would fall in love with her in earnest. It was inevitable.

How strange it is, Dave thought, to sit here in the midst of people, indulging in ideas that would horrify them all if they were spoken. Most of all, Faith. All she wants of Beverly is to guide his career, as she once tried to guide mine. That, and a little something more. To feel close to John Haddon. And to recover her youth. She had no youth when she was a girl. Now that she is a mature woman, with a little leisure, she wants it back. And Beverly is giving it to her. She has a right to it. I should be glad that she is having it, only . . .

There was no answer. Human rights always get into a hopeless snarl. No hope of straightening them out and laying them side by side with the chaste neatness of parallel lines. They cross and re-cross and in the end there's always hell to pay.

He glanced up as the swinging door to the kitchen creaked

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open. In the crack, Dave saw on different levels one eye belonging to each of his children. He tried to warn them away with a smile. But they seemed to have taken it as an invitation. The door opened a little more. Nina should not have allowed them to come and spy on the party. She was eleven years old. But probably she was the ring-leader in this open defiance of discipline. What she wanted was a glimpse of Beverly Howard. Beverly had flattered her enormously by taking her skating. Probably she felt that she had a certain right to him, now.

"Let's go in by the fire," Dave suggested, hoping to forestall the crisis when the children would tumble on their faces into the diningroom. There was a scurrying of footsteps in the pantry as he spoke.

He arranged the chairs about the hearth, putting one for Waldo under the light where he could see to read. He went to his desk and brought out the box of cigars that he kept especially for these evenings. As he moved briskly back and forth, it seemed to him that he was not really present in this room at all. This automaton who went so correctly through the maneuvers of the courteous host was not himself. Dave Fraser had ceased to exist. A plausible, cleverly animated replica was left in his place.

If I lose my wife, I shall be nothing, he thought. Faith has been the positive part of me too long. She does not want to be any more. I have a comfortable job now. But I may lose it as I lost my work on the Argus and in politics. Faith wants nothing to do with it.

Another child might fix her attention unwaveringly once more. But apparently there wasn't to be one. That long period when they weren't lovers at all had made nature sluggish, indifferent, spiteful perhaps. . . . It was over, thank God, that incredible martyrdom of longing and going unsatisfied. But the effects remained. They were not close any more. If only they could be.

He wished suddenly that he believed in prayer. He would pray for a child. . . . It was the only hope. Otherwise he had lost Faith forever.

"Will you have a cigar, Beverly?"

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The young man's eyes opened wide with pleasure at the prospect of an unusual treat.

Yes, I must stand here offering you a cigar, when I'd like to be pounding those god-awful eyes of yours black and swollen. But why? I should be a ghost, swinging at a ghost. Beverly Howard is nothing but a disembodied memory of John Haddon. And I am nothing but a vague recollection of the late David Fraser.

He laughed aloud and then realizing that the sound seemed startling, almost raucous, among these people who expressed amusement with the utmost decorum, he tried to justify it.

"I was thinking of a story I heard yesterday about city politics," he said and launched into the first anecdote that came into his mind.

VIII

(June, 1908)

FAITH sat perched on the edge of the bathtub, trying to organize her ideas about determinism. David stood at the mirror drawing his face into a appalling, out-of-focus look; not helping her to attack her problem at all. It was hard to make him concentrate on an abstract subject. With him a discussion soon raveled out into tag ends of gossip and epigram. Probably he considered it impertinent of her to try to say something new about determinism, after all the philosophers had written of it so exhaustively. *Exhaustingly*, David would say.

But if she were to write a paper for the Scholar Gypsies on such a difficult subject, she must try to make a small contribution of her own. She had never been content simply to copy great raw, undigested paragraphs out of the Encyclopedia Britannica as most of the other women did. Sometimes she wished she had never become active in the Scholar Gypsies' study club, after those years when she had gone nowhere at all. It was Beverly Howard who had persuaded her to rejoin. He had told her that she needed an intellectual outlet. Beverly had flattered her into it, and now there was no escape.

What worried her was that the time was getting so short. Only a week more and she must have her paper ready. Still she was being lured off into all the by-paths of the subject, reading Kant and Descartes. Her notes were drifting into great heaps on her desk and not a line of her own was written.

"The trouble is," she said aloud, "that I've been seduced by Spinoza. He doesn't let me get on with my work at all."

David turned to smile at her through the lather that he had splashed onto his brow and even into his hair.

"That's rather an accomplishment in itself. As I remember Spinoza, he used to be a good deal of an ascetic who made

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eye-glasses and wrote quite incomprehensible books about philosophy, but hardly gave the girls a thought at all. He must have changed considerably since the Seventeenth Century."

Faith stretched her legs across the distance between the bathtub and the clothes-hamper, bringing her toes neatly together on its edge.

"Just the same, he has seduced my mind. What worries me is that he may not have left it in an interesting condition."

There was a sputtering sound out of the soapy mask that covered David's face and then a gasp of pain. A trickle of red showed through the lather.

"Now see what you've done," David reproached her. "How many times have I told you not to make jokes while I'm shaving? You'll make me cut my throat one of these days."

As she bathed the cut with a wash-cloth, Faith experienced the familiar confusion of emotions that had always characterized her relationship to David. She liked his appreciation of her joke. It was he who had taught her to invite these unexpected shifts of mood, these variations on a figure of speech, which produced their little witticisms. She had learned David's own technique of letting thought degenerate into epigram. But beneath the pleasure was a protest. David did not want to be serious. Beverly Howard liked wit, too. But when a serious discussion had been embarked upon he did not veer from it. She would never have said such a thing about Spinoza to Beverly Howard.

Of course, it wasn't fair to blame David. She had ruined the subject herself.

"Oh David," she said, "I'm not fit to try to write such a paper. Everything I read just opens up a new depth of ignorance before me. I feel as though I were recklessly plunging down into darkness. I'll be swallowed up. I wish I were educated. I wish I knew things. . . ."

David put down his razor and turned toward her.

"Darling, look upon an educated man and know how lucky you are to be unlike him. I couldn't begin to grapple with abstract concepts the way you do. Being educated is not a matter of

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having flounced through thirty or forty courses in a college. It has to do with wanting to know. You do. . . . I don't."

Probably that was true. But if you wanted to know and then were given an opportunity to study, you became like Beverly Howard. You had some reliable knowledge by which to measure ideas.

"But I haven't a disciplined mind, David," she went on thinking aloud. "I know what Spinoza means when he protests against the idea of man's being a kingdom within a kingdom, disturbing, instead of following, nature's order. And yet I have a sentimental revulsion against the idea of determinism. What are the determinants that start the sequence of cause and effect in a human mind? They are heredity and environment, aren't they? Well, then, you'd expect our children all to be the same, wouldn't you? They have the same heredity and the same environment. But they couldn't very well be more unlike each other than they are. So I keep coming back to the feeling that there must be an unknown factor that upsets the working of absolute determinism. The individual trait, as it shows itself in Nina, or in Judith, or in Joel, is the result of the interaction of the two forces of heredity and environment."

"That's the stuff to give the Scholar Gypsies," David applauded. "Your old formula: character is the sum total of heredity plus environment plus the interaction of the two forces."

"I've said it a thousand times. I keep saying it to the children, trying to help them understand themselves. But when I read the speculations of the real philosophers, I get depressed about my own little efforts to interpret them."

Nina appeared in the bathroom door. Her small eyes were contracted in rage. They looked like little black stars. Her straight, wiry hair stood all about her head like an explosion.

"That crazy Esther," she scolded; "she didn't press my white dress for Sunday school. I told her and told her all day yesterday that I had to have it. But when I asked her for it this morning, she just stood there, like a big silly cow or something. Stupidity . . ." The word came out with a long hissing emphasis on the first letter. The effect seemed to please Nina even in the

midst of her anger. She began to experiment with the further possibilities of sibilants. "Stupidity, stirred up and seething."

David turned toward Faith to hide a smile. But Faith felt more irritated than amused. Only a week ago, when the dress had been given Nina to wear to Sunday school she had had a tantrum and refused to put it on. It was the ugliest dress in the world, she insisted, screaming with indignation at the idea of being asked to expose herself to ridicule in it. No wonder Esther was confused.

"Nina, you have no right to speak that way about Esther. You'll have to wear the dress you wore last Sunday. I know Esther has that one ready."

"I hate Esther. I'd like to spit in her eye."

"I shall have to punish you if you keep on talking that way. Last week, you almost tore the dress off your back. This week you've come suddenly to love it. No one can be expected to know what you want. What makes you so bad?"

Nina cocked her head impertinently. "Heredity, plus environment, plus the interaction of the two forces," she mimicked. Then realizing that she could not improve on the effect of that audacity, she disappeared.

Faith followed her down the hall, biting on her own anger and her own perplexity. Sundays were always like this. As David had said, they were an *opéra bouffe* family, needing only a musical setting, to make their improbable idiocy complete. Sunday exaggerated all the familiar traits, making them utterly ridiculous. Shut up together, for an entire day, they played on each other's nerves, sensibilities, risibilities. They indulged, alternately, in gales of mutually appreciative laughter and equally enthusiastic recrimination. The children had caught from their father the disease of loving an audience. David encouraged them in their mimicry. He even undertook to criticize and improve their styles of story-telling.

As she approached the girls' room, Faith heard Judith rehearsing her imitation of plump and perspiring Mrs. Priest who occasionally visited school to superintend the silly instruction in physical training.

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"Places, cheel-dren," she heard the mocking voice, well launched in the familiar monologue. "Now let's all be little soldiers and not be afraid to bend our little backs. Shall we remember to keep our little knees stiff as we bend over? Tha-at's goo-ud. . . . Rast . . . ac-teeve. . . . Rast . . . ac-teeve. . . . Now let's fill our little lungs and blow the candle out. . . . Ah . . . pouff. . . . Ver-ry goo-ud."

Faith opened the door. Judith was standing in her drawers and undershirt, managing to look quite as much like a grossly overdone caricature of a Pouter pigeon as did Mrs. Priest herself.

"Rast . . . ac-teeve . . .," she began again. "Now as I walk about the room, let's all keep our bright little eyes straight ahead. Ah! Ah! What is your name, my little man? Julius? Well, Julius, you have a goo-ud eye. But you should sit at the back of the clahss so that you can take in the whole room at one glawnce. . . . Rast . . . ac-teeve."

Seeing her mother, Judith stopped short in her performance and let a defiant smile spread slowly over her broad, pretty face. It was no wonder, Faith thought, that her children vied with one another in an effort to be noticeable. They heard no talk in the family circle but what was concerned, either directly or indirectly, with the technique of platform success. Joel was the only one who did not seem determined to make every moment of his life worthy of attention and applause.

As she stood looking desperately at the Sunday morning chaos in which Nina and Judith had left their room, Faith caught a glimpse of her son through the window. He was already dressed. Waiting for his sisters, he wandered back and forth across the side-lawn, talking excitedly to himself. Obviously he was engaged in one of those endless dramas in which he played all the parts, speaking the dialogue of each rôle in turn. He could improvise endlessly on any theme suggested by a book lately read aloud, or by the play lately seen. So sweet and solitary and unexacting! . . . Radiant! . . . Yes, he was a radiant child. There was an illumination behind his eyes that testified to the warmth and graciousness of feeling in him. He was a perfect compensation for all the trials of rearing a family. Perfect. . . .

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But there were the girls to be dealt with. How could she possibly punish them for their assertiveness? David himself encouraged it. She would just have to manage each of the crises, as it came along, with as much patience as she could manage.

"Children," she said severely, "unless you are both ready for Sunday school in five minutes, you will be too late to go at all." That was what Spencer advised: to let the punishment be the natural result of the fault. "If you don't go to Sunday school, you will have nothing to contribute to conversation at the dinner table this noon and you'll have to eat by yourselves in your own room."

She saw that the threat had touched their imaginations. There was nothing that the girls liked more than to dine with their father on Sunday. He spoiled them outrageously with his applause for their impertinences. It seemed never to occur to David that the continual chatter of Nina and Judith ruined adult conversation. But thank heaven, there were the Sunday evenings with Beverly Howard, and the rest, to restore a proper balance. Tonight she could tell Beverly about how she had got swamped by Spinoza and Kant and Descartes. He would help pull her out.

As she picked up soiled clothes and closed bureau drawers, she found that she was haranguing Nina and Judith in the automatic way that she had fallen into.

"It seems very strange to Mother that you want always to destroy the pleasure that any of us might take in Sunday, by your unwillingness to cooperate. All either of you thinks about is getting attention for herself. Judith you're quite as bad as Nina. You haven't done a thing to help this morning. You can't even be relied upon to dress yourself. I don't see what it is that makes you so different from your little brother. He's out there waiting patiently, all dressed and ready to go, while you two big children play and waste time and indulge in tantrums. I declare Mother doesn't know what to do with you. It seems as though sometimes. . . ."

She looked down to see Nina standing directly before her.

"Mother," the little girl declared emphatically, "you shouldn't

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be so high-strung. How can you expect us to get dressed if we're supposed to listen to one of your ten-hour lectures?"

What would Spencer say should be done with a child like that! Strange girl! Sometimes she seemed so bright. But she did not do at all well in school. Miss Hush had said so patronizingly of Nina: "Of course, you won't try to send her to college." Not try to send her to college! It had been Faith's own dream of perfect happiness to be allowed to go to college. And now Nina's eighth-grade teacher thought it was not worth while trying to educate her. How was it possible not to be desperately disappointed in such a child? Faith had hoped to fulfill her ambitions through her children. Not through Nina. Not through Judith. But there was Joel. . . . Thank heaven! there was Joel.

She felt too depressed even to rebuke Nina's impertinence.

"I'm going to get your hair ribbons. I expect you to be ready by the time I come back."

It was absurd that a big girl like Nina couldn't be trusted to take care of her own hair ribbons. But she had developed the fixed idea that she was too old to wear ribbons, and she always managed discreetly to lose them if they were left in her charge.

With a sigh, Faith opened the drawer of her bureau. Lying among the handkerchiefs she saw Joel's valentine. He had made it several years ago, but it had touched her so deeply that she had kept it. She took it out and held it fondly in her hand. He had made it himself. The pink heart had been cut from a piece of his father's copy paper. Around the border were the rigidly stiff stems and incredibly luxuriant leaves of flowers that he had made with his crayons. In the center he had printed in uncertain childish capitals: "You are like a flower to me."

It was strange that Joel should feel such a deep affection and express it with such sweet, childish tact. The girls were different: withdrawn from her somehow . . . unreachable. Heredity, plus environment, plus the interaction of the two forces. It did not come out right. Surely, the interaction of the two forces was not sufficient to account for the unlikeness of Joel to his sisters. There was something rare and magical about the way his spirit was unfolding.

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The valentine slipped from her fingers. Stooping to pick it up, Faith felt inundated by a wave of nausea, just as she had when she woke in the morning. All day she had been waiting for a headache to follow. But it had not come on, as it usually did. She began to worry. Could she possibly be pregnant again after so many years? She had surrendered long ago to the confidence that all was over for her.

She sat down on the bed, her heart beating hard with excitement at this prospect. She did not want to be pregnant. For the last few years she and David had had a little ease, a little feeling of security. Even so, they were able to save nothing. Joel's two attacks of pneumonia had taken their little savings. She had been so desperately frightened that she had ordered a pulmotor into the house in preparation for the terrible emergency, if it should come. They had been spared such a crisis and Joel was alive and well again. That was all that mattered. Only it was dismal to think of having to face doctor's bills again.

But that wasn't quite all, she admitted to herself. She did not want her pleasant life interrupted. Everything would stop: going to concerts and the theater, the Sunday evenings with Beverly and Roger and Waldo. That was what she minded most of all.

Of course, if there were a natural break in the relationship with Beverly, it would be for his good. He ought to marry instead of being satisfied with this empty relationship to herself. He was in love with her, of course, in so far as he was capable of being in love with anyone. But Beverly wasn't much of a man. Compared with David, he seemed like a child. A very bright child, to be sure, but still not to be taken seriously. When he popped his big eyes at her, trying to express some sort of Pre-Raphaelite, blessed-damosel reverence, he almost made her laugh.

Poor Beverly! That was an ungrateful way to think of him. He had added something to her life at a moment when she desperately needed something. The feeling of imaginative richness, the sense of intellectual adventure that the Sunday evenings gave her were all associated with him. After the barrenness of the years when she and David had hidden away in obscurity and

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poverty, Beverly had appeared like Prometheus bringing the gift of fire to warm and light her days.

But he was no Prometheus. She had soon discovered that. Actually their friendship had thrived on his weakness. Beverly imagined that his health was poor and that he had to nurse himself tenderly. There was the time when he had been about to decline an invitation to teach summer school at the University of Chicago. She had bullied him into going, and his success had added enormously to his academic prestige. He was sure that his articles were too learned to be published. But when she had chopped up his horrible sentences into readability, they had sold easily. He was becomingly grateful. But, somehow, it was not very attractive to see him contented with so meagre a relationship. At first she had been deliberately austere so that he should not think that she cared for him at all emotionally. But there had been no need to be so circumspect. Beverly's affection for her was sheep-eyed, sheepishly docile and altogether very woolly. . . . Mary had a little lamb. . . . And still she would miss it . . . miss it terribly.

If she were pregnant, Beverly's sensibilities would be affected by the new image of her. Perhaps he would stop thinking of her as his mother. He might marry Laura Veblen. No, it seemed more likely that Roger Spence would do that. But anyway, Beverly would be off her hands. Oh yes, that would be good. She had often felt a kind of back-handed jealousy that she should be interesting herself in Beverly's career, rather than in David's. But she could never do that again. Never . . . she had ruined David's newspaper career by insisting that he champion unpopular causes. And she had ruined his career in office by insisting on a kind of high-mindedness that no one wanted. She did not dare to interfere again. Too much was at stake: the house they lived in, the children's security. No, if she had to develop high-mindedness in some poor unfortunate creature it might better be Beverly. It was safer. No one minded a professor's being high-minded.

She began to be almost glad at the prospect of being pregnant. It would end her excursion into the learned world. But that was

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not really her life. She was an alien in it. She belonged in this house, with the problems and the prospects of which she and David were the real creators. Joel was a promising prospect and Nina an unpromising one. Judith was an enigma. But these were her mysteries to solve. If a pregnancy would help her to concentrate on them, then she was glad to be pregnant. She must tell David, this instant, while she felt optimistic about it.

He had just finished shaving and was putting his razor away.

"The children were looking for you," he said.

"Oh David, you didn't let them escape without their ribbons."

"They're waiting with Joel in the side-yard. Poor darling," he laughed, "what with your intellectual pursuits and your maternal pursuits, you have to keep running, don't you. But at least you're getting a liberal education."

"What would you think, if I were to do some post-graduate work," she said, trying to make use of his bantering mood.

"Have you started your paper on determinism? I suppose you've done the whole thing while I was shaving."

"No, but I think I've started something else. Well, you needn't look so startled. It isn't as though I didn't have my diploma. . . . And even if he has seduced me, Spinoza is not the father of this baby."

David caught her into his arms. For a moment she could not tell whether the tension of his body expressed anxiety or happiness. As she drew back to face him, she saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"David, are you as distressed as all that?"

He smiled. "No . . . as glad as that."

"But why should you care so much?"

"I don't know. But I do."

"I didn't know you wanted a child. . . . Funny David!"

"Faith. . . . I wanted you."

"You've had me, darling, always. . . ."

"Have I? Then I'm doubly glad."

Strange man! He was holding her the way he did when they were making up a quarrel, with a desperate, panic-stricken intensity. There had not been many quarrels, recently. After th

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time that Joel had been waked and appeared downstairs in the midst of one of them, she had been determined to prevent them. So she had let issues slide.

But had she let David slip away from her along with the moral issues that had once seemed so sacred to her? It was absurd to try to substitute anything for her intimacy with David. You could not have the excellent life by sacrificing anything as important as that.

"Oh David, hold me," she said aloud, but more to herself than to him. "Don't let me ever go away from you. I want so many things. I want life to be important. I suppose I've wanted to think that I was important in and of myself. Help me to remember that what I really want most is just to be good to you and the children. Help me, David. . . . Sometimes I'm such a fool."

His arms went still closer about her, hurting her. She was glad of the hurt, glad to belong to David.

IX

(November, 1908)

MOTHER looked so beautiful, sitting there in front of the fire, reading aloud. Joel was sure she was the most beautiful mother that anybody had ever had. Her hair sparkled like gold, with the lamp shining right on it. That was her nicest dress. The purple color went with the color of the stones in the necklace that she wore. Joel wished that Mother would always wear this dress when she went out so that everybody would know how beautiful she was. Her other dresses were pretty, too, of course. But not as pretty as this one with the sleeves that hung down low over the arms of her chair. The dresses that Mother wore when she went out had no sleeves at all and that made them much less pretty.

Joel did not understand very much of what Mother was reading. Nothing at all, really. But it did not matter that he could not understand. It was more like music than like reading. When Nina took him to the symphony concerts on Friday nights he felt just as he did listening to Mother read.

It was better to understand, if you could. That was why it was more fun, really, to go to the theater than to listen to music. There was nothing like the theater. Father got him tickets for matinees almost every Saturday. There were other plays, too, that he got the good of, partly. Father sent the maid to the stock company on her night off and the next day, after dinner, Joel would sit in the kitchen while she washed the dishes and make her tell him all about the play. Esther was awfully stupid. When you asked her what the plot was, she didn't even know what you meant. But if you kept at her and at her with questions you could finally find out what the play was about.

This was the wonderful half of life. Things began to be fun on Friday when you came home from school and the rooms down-

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stairs were full of the smell of furniture polish. On Friday night there was the symphony concert, on Saturday afternoon, the matinee and on Sunday afternoon, the reading aloud. That was all so good that you could stand the rest, just thinking about what was going to happen if you only got through the week. There was nothing in the whole world as good as seeing the curtain go up on a play. It was terrible to be late and not be there to see the curtain go up. But Joel could always scream and yell at whoever was taking him to the matinee and get them started on time.

You could make the rest of the week not so bad, not so terribly bad, by pretending that everything you did was part of a play. Joel loved to sit at his bedroom window, letting himself see only as much as he would if the world outside were a stage. Then anyone who appeared became a character in a play, crossing the stage with a purpose, doing something that was part of the play. Or, you could make a theater out of a berry crate and even fix a curtain that rolled up and down. He and Erik Veblen had made one together. Erik could do things with his hands. He drew the figures for *Romeo and Juliet*. But Joel told him how they should look and colored in the costumes with crayons.

It was dangerous to let people know about your theater games. Joel's cheeks burned with humiliation every time that he thought of the time the man had overheard him acting out one of his own plays on the street. Usually Joel played the game only in the backyard. But that day he had forgotten and played it on the street. And a man came up beside him when he wasn't noticing. He looked down at Joel and said: "Boy, are you bugs?" Joel ran and ran until he got so tired he nearly dropped. Even to think about it made him feel hot all over and terribly uncomfortable.

A wheezing sound interrupted Mother's reading. She paused for a moment and looked toward the couch where Father was lying. Joel's glance followed that of his mother. Father had fallen asleep. He was lying there with his mouth half open, snoring. That piece of hair that Father twisted all the time hung over his eyes. One of his slippers had fallen off. Father was a very untidy man. Joel felt angry at him for interrupting the reading.

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After a moment, Mother went on. But the feeling of closeness to her was broken because Joel found that he kept waiting anxiously for each of Father's snores. And then when it came he was angrier than ever.

Presently Mother shut the book with a snap. "It's no use, Son," she said and smiled. "We've driven your sisters away and put your father to sleep."

He knew what Mother was waiting for him to say and he said it eagerly:

"Oh, don't stop. Can't we go upstairs to your room?"

The reading always ended up in Mother's room. It ended up with Joel on Mother's lap. Before it was time to go to bed, they had one of their long talks. Mother never talked to the girls as she talked to him. She had told him lots of things about when she was a little girl. Some of it made him sad and angry because of the way Mother had been treated. Grandmother Winchester had been mean. She hadn't let Mother have an education. She liked Mother's sisters better than she liked Mother. It made him hate Aunt Margaret and Aunt Kathie. He was glad Grandmother Winchester was dead.

And there were the stories about the time when Mother worked for the newspaper and had to walk late at night through dark streets. Mother was like a heroine in a play. She had had to do lots of hard things. But she never stopped trying just because things were hard. Joel hated to think of the time she had been in that accident on the streetcar. The picture of Mother lying on the floor with those horrible men staring down at her was like something that might happen in a play just before the curtain came down.

Mother was like an actress. It had been horrible that time he had waked in the night and gone downstairs to find out what Mother was talking about so loud. She was scolding Father, the way she did the girls. Joel had stood in the doorway for a long time before they saw him. Mother walked back and forth. Her eyes were wide like an actress's and she made gestures like an actress. She was beautiful. But even though it had excited him, he couldn't bear to see Mother so angry. He had run to her,

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crying. Mother had held him tight and Father said: "Are you going to drag that child into this?" It had been terrible. . . . But exciting, too. . . . Like a play.

Mother had taken him upstairs and sat on the bed, holding his hand. She was crying. When Joel asked her why, she just said in a funny way: "Oh God, how much am I expected to endure?" . . . "Please don't cry, Mother," he had said and Mother looked at him, straight in the face, but as though she didn't see him and answered: "What does it matter? I cried all the way to Chicago on the night I was married. I suppose I shall go on being driven to desperation all my life."

The next time he and Mother had had one of their talks, he had asked her why she cried all the way to Chicago. She didn't remember telling him and was a little cross at him for asking.

It was queer, though. In plays when people got married they were glad. It gave him a queer feeling about Father . . . as though Joel ought to try to protect Mother against him.

And still most of the time when he woke and went downstairs to see what was happening, Father and Mother would be laughing together . . . laughing hard, Mother sitting on Father's lap. Those were the times when one of them had made a speech somewhere and they were talking it over. It was nice to find them like that, only on those nights it was Mother who wanted to send him back to bed and Father who wanted to take him on his lap.

Joel did not like Father to hold him. His whiskers scratched and his arms held too tight and there was a smell of tobacco in his clothes. And beside, Joel could not ever forget about the time Mother had cried all the way to Chicago. . . . If Mother let him stay on those nights when they were laughing together, Joel would get into the Morris chair and fall asleep. In the morning he always knew that it was Father who had carried him back to bed because the blankets weren't fixed properly. If Mother had been there, she would have done it right.

But there had been wonderful things in Mother's life, too. All the fun she had had writing speeches for Father when he was running for Mayor. . . . And the time the men in the office had hung a silver bell around her neck. Mother had had a real

police whistle when she was a reporter. She had said once that she would find it and give it to Joel. That would impress the kids at school. . . . And there were the wonderful men Mother used to know at Onondaga. Joel loved the stories about Dr. Haddon and Dr. Waldron. Mother thought that some day Joel might be a professor of English in a college like Dr. Waldron. Dr. Waldron had written a lot of books. One of them was a book of stories for children. It was called *What Sir Gawain Learned*. Dr. Waldron had sent it to Joel, with something written in it especially for him. He was a wonderful man. Joel thought he might be a professor of English because Mother admired Dr. Waldron so much. Only it would be more fun to write plays that could really be acted on a stage.

When they got started talking tonight, he might tell Mother about wanting to write a play and maybe have her act in it.

As they climbed the stairs hand in hand, Joel thought of all the other things he would tell Mother. He would tell her about *Rip Van Winkle* which he had seen at the Grand Opera House the day before and about how he had had to explain everything about the play to the crazy kids he had taken with him to sit in a stage box. And about how Mr. Wilkins had said that his voice was the best in the choir and that he was to sing a solo part two Sundays from today. He wanted to ask Mother if he ought not to be confirmed in the church next Easter. It wasn't Father's and Mother's church. Joel had begun going to the Episcopal chapel because he wanted to sing in the choir. Mother and Father were Unitarians. But their church wasn't very interesting. The minister did not wear a cassock and cotta. The singing was nothing at all. The Episcopal church was much better, really. It was like going to a play every Sunday. The boy who had the best record for attendance was allowed to wear a silver cross on a purple cord and Joel wore it most of the time. Mr. Collins, the minister, had asked him to speak to Mother about Confirmation classes. Mr. Collins was coming himself to talk about it and it was all terribly exciting.

Joel wanted to ask Mother also what he could do about the crazy kids in school. Even when he took them to the theater they

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were just as mean the next day. Father wanted him to make the kids like him. He bought Joel all kinds of stuff for football and baseball. But it was no use. They just let him be on the team so that they could use his nose-guard and stuff and half the time they thought of some excuse to keep him out of the game. Joel didn't really care about being in the game. He was only afraid that Mother would be disappointed.

The kids were all so ignorant. They didn't speak good grammar and made fun of Joel for the words he used. When they called him Teacher's Pet, he tried to make them approve of him by saying that he detested Miss Boyd. But there was something wrong with that, too. They all danced around him and said: "Oh, Joellie dee-tests teacher. Joellie dee-tests teacher."

Once when they sicked Stanley Merrill on him for no reason at all, Joel had got good and mad and given Stanley a black eye. They had liked him for a while after that. But not for long. It was only a week later that Mother had sent him to school with her own fur cape around his shoulders. Ever since he had had pneumonia, Mother had made him dress up like that when it got awfully cold. All the kids had jumped on him that day and mawled him until he cried. Even Erik Veblen, who was supposed to be his friend, had made fun of him. Joel hadn't dared to tell Mother that, because he knew it would make Mother mad at Mrs. Veblen. She would probably have talked to Mrs. Veblen about it and that would only have made things worse.

It was no use trying to make the kids like him. He didn't like them either. Their fathers were milkmen and truck-drivers. They were impressed when Joel told them that his father had been Mayor of Drummond, but they hated him for it. They accused him of thinking that he was better than they were. He had to lie about it and pretend that he didn't think so when he really did. They were dumb in school and they talked all kinds of bad grammar and their teeth were yellow. Erik Veblen was the only boy in the whole school who wasn't like that. Erik got along with them all right because he could play football and didn't mind using the dirty words that you had to

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use to make those dumb kids think you weren't a sissy. Joel had tried to use them, but they just wouldn't come out. He always got to thinking of how hurt Mother would be if she could hear him using them.

He knew now that school would always be terrible. It was dreadful to have to wake up on Monday morning. But he tried to remember that Friday would come again. There was choir practise to stop the week from being too unbearable. Then the concert again and the theater again and singing solos in the choir and the Sunday afternoon reading.

He placed Mother's chair for her in front of the upstairs fireplace and sat on the footstool at her side. They always began that way and after a while, Mother would make a place for him on her lap. She did not stop reading, but just threw back her arm and smiled. He climbed up without a word and the reading went on.

But tonight Mother only looked at the fire and did not begin to read. To remind her of what she was supposed to do, Joel said:

"Why does Father always fall asleep when you read?"

"I don't know, Son." Mother let her hand fall on his head. "It's probably because he has had a very busy week. He was out, speaking, three times. That's very tiring. You know your father is an important man."

It always disturbed Joel when Mother began to talk like that. He knew that his father was an important man. He had been Mayor of Drummond and all that stuff. Joel was proud of his father. But he couldn't forget about that time in Chicago. When Mother seemed to expect him to say he loved his father, he didn't know what to do. He didn't love Father. How could he be expected to love a father that had made his mother cry all the way to Chicago, the very first thing, after they were married?

"But there is no excuse for your sisters," Mother was going on. "They don't care for music or books or any of the things you and I love. I keep wondering what can have made you so different from them."

That wasn't quite fair. Nina loved the concerts as much as he

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did. They were sometimes almost friendly when they came home together on the streetcar on Friday nights and talked about what they'd heard. Judith liked going to the theater as much as he did. Only you couldn't talk to Judith. All she ever wanted to say was something about how something ached: her back or her head or something inside. Joel had learned just not to listen to her. But he didn't want to defend Nina and Judith. They were as mean as they could be. They were always making fun of him in front of other people about being a sissy. Even at school they told people things against him about loving to wear the silver cross as though he were a girl. Nina had done that when Stanley Merrill and Carl Olson were listening.

"I'm afraid I can't read any more tonight," Mother said suddenly and threw her arm back in the way that meant he was to climb up onto her lap.

"Then tell me about when you were a little girl," he urged.

X

(July, 1909)

"ESTHER," Faith called down the backstairs, "would you please ask Mary to come up here again? We're having another emergency."

For a moment, she drooped against the wall, waiting to tell Mary what to do. It was the first time she had stopped running since morning. She had been up most of the night as well with one child or another. This terrible heat seemed to make them sicker than ever. Faith tried to make her memory reach back to a blissful time when they had not had whooping-cough. But probably there never had been any such time. She had only dreamed it and then waked again to hold Nina's head or Judith's or Joel's while the poor little creature strained and gagged and seemed about to die in her arms. She had grown used to the routine, now, and knew that they weren't going to die. But she had not trusted herself with the baby. It tore her apart to see little Bruce, who was still less than half a year old, suffering that way. The nurse took complete charge of him. Nina had been a help with the younger children. Thank heaven, Nina had risen to the emergency, in spite of being sick herself.

Mary came bumping up the backstairs, her mop and pail nearly tripping her on every step. But she grinned cheerfully as she came.

"I'll bet it's that Judy," she declared with a kind of amiable despair. "She's always sick on the floor . . . unless it's the bran clean sheets."

"Yes," Faith told her, "it's Miss Judith. Thank heaven, we have to clean only the floor, this time."

Mary laughed with what David called her Elizabethan gusto. It was good that she could be so patient. Judith made such a lot of work. She seemed to luxuriate in the fact that, at last, she

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was really sick. After so many years spent in trying conscientiously to develop an ache or a pain with which to get attention, she entered into the spirit of the present crisis with active enjoyment. Joel managed to be sick with a certain degree of fastidiousness. And Nina was really amazing. She was sick as unobtrusively as possible. Faith remembered times in the old days at the Argus when she would slip away, just as Nina did, and then go back to her desk as though nothing had happened. Nina had pride. That was something to build on.

At the door of the girls' room, Mary stopped.

"Don't come in, Mrs. Fraser. I'll fix Judy all up fresh."

As the door opened, Faith saw Nina turning away from the window. "Mother," she called and nearly knocked Mary over in her eagerness to get into the hallway. "Mr. Howard is here. I've been talking to him from the window. He wants to take you canoeing."

Faith frowned. "Oh dear, I wish he hadn't come today. I can't possibly see him."

"But you must, Mother. He's come all the way from the University, just to get you away from the house for a little while."

It was amusing the way Nina worshipped Beverly. If the great Mr. Howard chose to play the rôle of Sir Galahad and rescue a mere woman out of her distress, it was inconceivable to Nina that his gesture should be treated with anything but reverent gratitude. I suppose I've given her that point-of-view, Faith thought, by the way I've talked about him. But my respect is for Beverly's world rather than for Beverly himself. Still, it's been good for Nina to revere learning. It's what has raised her school marks so amazingly.

Nina had developed beyond Faith's most optimistic hopes. By imperceptible steps she had progressed out of stubborn childishness, where she had lingered so long. It was as though her mind had been boxed up in a kind of black perversity. Once that container had been destroyed her intelligence had begun to unfold in the light. Beverly had much to do with releasing Nina's spirit. He had been patiently attentive to the child. But Faith had also a large share in her development. Surprise and relief

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had prompted her to make much of Nina's successes. This period, during which they had been shut up together with sickness ruling the household, had completed Nina's devious and tortuous approach to maturity. She felt that she had been Faith's ally in the whole dreadful siege. It made her, at last, a responsive and responsible creature.

There were still souvenirs of her strange childishness. Only the other day Faith had been driven away from her duties as nurse, by the overwhelming demands of a sick headache. As she lay sleeping fitfully, the door had creaked open. Waked by the sound, she had seen Nina on the threshold. "I'm glad you're having such a nice nap," the child had said and crept away. She was quite unaware that she had ruined the moment's respite.

But incidents like that only served to emphasize the real change that had come upon her. Nina's desire to be considerate had been sincere. It was at least partly consideration for her mother which now made her urge that Beverly's invitation be accepted.

"You know you were awake most of the night, Mother. You're always telling me that I must rest if I expect to do good work in school. It's the same with you. If you want to be a good nurse for Judith and Joel, you have to go away sometimes."

Miss Maxwell came out of the baby's room.

"You go, Mrs. Fraser," she urged. "The baby's sleeping. I can keep an eye on the other children."

Assuming that this show of authority had settled the matter, Miss Maxwell went into Judith's room and closed the door. Nina still lingered at her mother's side.

Faith put an arm around the child's shoulders.

"You're a good girl to Mother," she said. "Do you want to help me change my dress?"

"Your pink linen, Mother. You look so nice in that."

If Nina had been told that she had suddenly become Princess of Earth and Heaven, she could not have looked happier.

I know that feeling, Faith thought, by the emptiness the lack of it left in me. If Mamma had ever told me that I was a good girl to her, I might have been a different person: less austere, less

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unsatisfied, less . . . whatever it is that makes me keep on looking for fulfillment. I might have been a normal person.

She studied Nina's face. There was a glow behind her eyes that reminded Faith of another time when Nina had been supremely happy. When was it? Yes, that was it: the day of the Valentine party when Faith had planned all the games and super-intended them so well that everything went off perfectly. In the midst of the party's radiance of good feeling, all the boys and girls whom Nina had antagonized from kindergarten days on, had been especially nice to her. When it was over and Faith was kissing Nina goodnight, the child had clung to her possessively. "Mother," she had said, "you make things so wonderful, when you try."

If it was so easy . . . if it could be done at all! . . . she must always make things wonderful for Nina. Was there any career to which a woman could give herself so whole-heartedly as making things wonderful for her children? It was what she had always wanted, really. Nina and Judith and Joel and Bruce should have the excellent life, if it lay within her power to create it.

In his white flannels, Beverly looked very young and much more handsome than usual. A stiff collar always made his neck look like a young bird's. Your first thought about him was that he needed to be fed. But now he looked very much at his ease. He had quite self-consciously chosen the blue tie to bring out the color of his eyes. But he could be forgiven a natural vanity of that kind. His more familiar vanities were of a rather monstrous kind, having to do with the fact that he considered himself abler than any rival in his academic field. A nice, innocent, boyish folly was rather pleasing in him, just by way of a change.

"You're looking very smart," she said with the deliberate intention of being provocative. "You make me feel almost as though I were a fluttering ingenue being allowed to go out for the first time, unattended by a chaperone."

He looked up, obviously startled by the lightness of her tone. Faith wondered if he had come simply out of a sense of duty, expecting to treat her like an old lady who needed an airing. The idea annoyed her. It was true, of course, that she had chosen

her own rôle in relation to all the young men from the University. She was their rather bright maiden aunt. But today, she decided suddenly, she would abandon that too tediously circumspect character. She would not be Beverly's maiden aunt.

"Yes," she went on, "you look about seventeen. I can very well understand why you have to bully your students into submission. On the first day they probably mistake you for a precocious Freshman."

Beverly had recovered his poise quickly and chosen a rôle that could be suitably matched with her new one.

"Would you like me to tell you how you look?"

He was planning to play the game of flirtation on its most rudimentary basis. In return for her bantering compliment he would pay her some baldly admiring tribute. That was childish of him. It rather pleased her to realize that she had dislodged him so successfully from his position of academic superiority. Still, she had no intention of listening to compliments of any kind.

"I have a reasonably active imagination," she laughed. "I know what a middle-aged woman must look like when she hasn't slept much for four or five weeks. Fortunately, I have discretion enough not to verify my worst suspicions by studying the mirror morbidly."

She had been, perhaps, a little too blunt and forbidding. When she glanced at Beverly, she saw that he looked troubled and a little sad.

"I think you don't know yourself very well," he said.

"That's quite horribly true. If I had been properly educated, do you think it would have made a difference?"

"Oh, you always take up a suggestion so seriously." His voice sounded impatient. "You're better educated than most people. Better than Irma Morgan, for example, in spite of the fact that she considers herself one of our leading *femmes fortes*. What I mean is that you paint a picture of yourself which none of your friends could recognize."

"Because I said that I had missed a great deal of sleep?"

"How could I possibly mean that? After all, I have a strongly developed logical faculty. . . ."

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"Because I admitted to being middle-aged then! But good heavens, I am. Thirty-seven."

"After thirty, everyone is the same age."

"If your logical faculty wouldn't consider itself demeaned by such a consideration, would you mind telling me what that has to do with anything we've been saying?"

"Oh never mind," he said, more evidently impatient than ever. Suddenly he changed the subject. "What do you hear from David?"

"He's having a beautiful time. I had a most amusing letter written from San Francisco. I must read it to you when we go back."

"It seems a shame you couldn't have gone with him."

"I was planning to go. But the children came down with whooping-cough."

"Yes, I know. There's some fatality about it, isn't there? You never seem to go on any of these trips. I've known of at least three. . . ."

"It's because I happen to have a gift for sacrifice. Since it's my only gift, I think I should be allowed to exercise it."

"That's another statement the truth of which your friends would not recognize."

They weren't getting on very comfortably with their new game of playfulness. They should have stuck to world economics, Faith decided. But it was impudent of him to consider that he had a right to criticize David, even by implication. She couldn't let that pass.

"I had to brow-beat David into going on this tour of the editors' association. After all, what could he have done if he had stayed at home? Nothing, unless it had been to whoop, out of sheer sympathy!"

The picture of David whooping made them both laugh, shame-facedly. Their mutual chagrin at having shared in such a trifling joke seemed to clear the atmosphere of antagonism and intensity. Beverly helped her down the bank in front of the Veblens' house and they ran along the shore to the dock where the boats were kept.

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Beverly paddled well. Obviously he knew that she was watching him with admiration. His arms moved with perfect precision as though to music that he alone could hear.

"You are revealing unsuspected talents," she said, feeling once more a kind of indulgent pride in his lithe and flexible skill.

Beverly smiled with pleasure.

"I ought to do it reasonably well. When I was a boy I spent my summers with an uncle who lived in the Canadian Lake of the Woods country. He was totally uneducated, but a wonderful out-of-doors man."

The naïve pride with which he spoke seemed to Faith to have an overtone of defiance. He was retorting bitterly to all the slurs that had been made upon his lack of manhood. She was touched and terribly sorry for him. Poor little Joel had already met the same kind of inhumanity. The tenderness that Joel's image never failed to rouse, surged up irresistibly and enveloped Beverly also. She felt, in this moment of isolation, almost as she did with Joel, when they talked together.

"Have you minded terribly having to stay in Drummond for the summer school session?"

"You know I haven't minded it. It's been the nicest summer I've ever had."

It was best not to answer at all, Faith thought. If Beverly would insist on turning every subject into a personal issue, she could only pretend not to understand.

"It can be nice here in summer," she said. "It's lovely today."

They passed the pavilion where the little Italian band had played last summer. In the midst of one of their concerts a summer storm had blown up, lifted the band-stand from the pavilion, and deposited it on the lake. The frightened little Italians had screamed like children. Each lightning flash had revealed their red-coated figures scurrying back and forth across the stand as though in some fantastic tragi-comedy. It was impossible to believe today that the lake had ever been the scene of melodrama. The tranquillity that enveloped it seemed hardly to belong to the real world.

Presently Beverly beached the canoe and they stepped out on

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the far shore where there were no houses. Faith sat on the ground, drawing her skirts snugly over her knees and tucking them in about her ankles. With an audacious air of abandon, Beverly stretched himself on the sand.

"I've wanted to tell you about your poems," he said abruptly.

"Oh yes?" Her heart was beating as though some important decision were about to be made.

"I showed them to Roger. That was all right, wasn't it?" Faith nodded. "He agreed with me that they were extremely good. You ought to publish them."

Faith laughed. "You speak as though one simply said: 'Oh well, I'll publish my poems' and then did. When I was writing seriously, during those years just before I knew you, I used to try to sell poetry. I had no success at all."

"You mustn't be discouraged. Roger said this sequence reminded him of Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*."

She wished that he had not said that. It seemed to raise the point about the one to whom they were addressed. She had not written her poems especially for David, as Mrs. Browning had written hers especially for Robert Browning. She was not even sure that they were about human love at all. Her poems were in praise of the excellent life, really. That was hard to explain to Beverly.

He was going on without waiting for an explanation. He quoted what Roger Spence had said about the delicacy of the imagery and the subtlety of her thought. Faith surrendered luxuriously to his admiration. And then suddenly she discovered that she was not listening to Beverly at all. She was just enjoying his presence. She was delighting in this isolation, delighting in the fact that they were far away from everyone and everything. For the moment: no sick children . . . no loneliness . . . no half resentment at David for having left her, even though she had urged him to go . . . nothing but complete tranquillity and peace.

But there was a flaw to the tranquillity, she found, as she turned to look at Beverly. She was startled by the beauty of his face and trembled.

This is how women happen to be unfaithful to their husbands,

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she thought. They are betrayed by loneliness and by the sudden awareness of another human being's loneliness. All day I've felt close to Beverly because I've felt so cut off from David. I've let myself feel tenderly toward him and forgotten everything else. In this minute I might as well have been his mistress, without being very deeply in love . . . just searching for comfort. I, who have always felt so immaculate. . . . It could have happened to me.

As though he had become aware of what she was thinking, Beverly suddenly sat upright and stared out across the water.

"Do you think we ought to go?" she asked.

"I think I ought to go . . . away from Drummond."

She knew what he meant, but she pretended desperately not to understand.

"Does that mean you are thinking of going? Have you had an offer somewhere else?"

"None that I consider good. But I ought to go anyway."

Faith stood up. "Someday you'll go. But not until it's something that will help you in your career. Your work . . . that's the only thing that counts."

She had said that once to John. There had been an intentional irony in the words when she had spoken them before. She could not help but hear the echo of that irony now. But there was nothing else she could say to Beverly.

"And in the meanwhile, you are my best friend and David's best friend. We can't let you leave until you're really ready. We must go now. I have to get back to the children."

On the way home, she talked animatedly, quoting all that she could remember of David's letter. Beverly said nothing. She, too, had fallen into silence as they climbed the hill in front of the Veblens' house. As she thought of what she would say to dismiss Beverly, she saw Nina running across the lawn from their own house.

"Nina," Faith called and hurried forward to meet her.

"Mother, won't you go in and see Mrs. Veblen for a minute? Dr. Sedgwick said to keep you here. . . ."

"Dr. Sedgwick! . . ." She threw off Nina's arms and ran.

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Why should Dr. Sedgwick be there. . . . Was it Joel? . . . Oh, if it should be Joel. . . . Joel, weakened by his pneumonia!

The doctor was telephoning in the front hall. She caught at his arm.

"What is it? What's happened? . . ."

"Now, Mrs. Fraser, you mustn't be excited. We're going to pull him through."

"But he was all right when I went out an hour ago. . . . I was with Joel all afternoon."

"Joel's all right. It's the baby. These little ones take whooping-cough very hard, you know. . . ."

A terrible sense of guilt swept over her. She hadn't even thought of the baby. . . . Only of Joel. . . . The baby! David's baby. . . . He would never forgive her. . . .

She was lying on her bed. But the opiate that Dr. Sedgwick had given her hadn't worked. She wouldn't sleep. She couldn't. While she had been with Beverly, neglecting her duties, thinking things that seemed utterly incredible now, the baby had become desperately sick. Why hadn't she looked at him before she left the house! The nurse should have known that that sleep wasn't natural. But she hadn't thought of the baby at all. That was because she had never really wanted Bruce. It had only been for David's sake that she had ever been able to persuade herself that she was glad. And now she was being punished for not wanting him. . . . Oh, not by God! She didn't believe that. She was being punished by nature's inexorable law of cause and effect. She had not wanted Bruce. When he was taken sick, she turned him over to a stupid nurse because she wanted to be with Joel. It was her indifference, her neglect that would kill the baby.

Oh, let me keep him, she whispered aloud. And I'll never ask for anything again.

But what good did it do to pray! Only her fear spoke. Like the King in *Hamlet*.

" . . . Help, angels! Make assay.

Bow stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe. . . ."

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Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe. . . .

She got to her feet. She must do something. Nina stood outside the door.

"Mother, you're not to come. The doctor said not to let you."

She caught at the child's shoulders.

"Oh, Nina," she said again and again, "let me keep him. . . ."

XI

(August, 1914)

BUFORD opened the door of Mrs. Veblen's summer house and Faith stepped into the deep shadow of the August night that lay over the scene. She sighed gratefully. Here they could be alone for a moment, away from the confusion and clatter of the garden party. It was too bad to have to bring Buford here when his visit was so short. But Mrs. Veblen was deeply involved in the suffrage movement and she would have resented it if Faith had not come to assist at this fête to raise money for "the cause."

As they sat down, Buford took her hand.

"You know, Faith," he said, "I feel more as though I were in Meadville now than I did when I was actually there, a week ago. Of all our old friends, you are the only one who is what I hoped to find. Everyone else has changed."

Not you, Buford! she wanted to say. Though his face was hidden in the shadows now, Faith could see him as he was when he came up her walk earlier in the afternoon: still slender, still graceful . . . with something more than grace . . . a spiritual dignity such as one associated with the faces of ascetics in old paintings. Buford had lived excellently and with a rich contentment.

"You needn't be sorry that you have never gone back," he went on. "The only time I really felt at home was in the cemetery. I hope that doesn't sound morbid. But I wasn't sorry to leave Mother there. She had suffered so cruelly before she died. I went to look at the Winchester grave, Faith. It seemed to me very beautiful . . . as though your father's fine spirit still presided over the knoll. I thought of Marvel's line: 'The grave's a fine and private place.' I wasn't sorry for the dead. No, I was much more depressed by the living."

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"Our house is gone. Someone . . . it must have been Legh . . . wrote me."

"Yes, they've built an addition to the school on the old ground. But yours has had a dignified end as compared with ours. It's a boarding-house. I went in and asked for a room just to see what it was like. I didn't even wait to talk to the owner. They had calcimined the living room wall the most poisonous pink you can conceive of . . . like a cheap bon-bon."

"You saw Legh?"

"She's old and really, I'm afraid, a little insane. She has chopped her hair off all around her face and she tries to give all her money away to the suffrage movement."

Faith laughed. "As you see, it is stampeding over us, too."

"Mother was definitely opposed to suffrage for women. My wife hasn't much time for such interests, with five children to rear. Do you believe in it, Faith?"

"I don't know. Mrs. Veblen keeps talking about the purifying influence women will exercise on politics. I was never able to perceive any such delicate-minded sensibility when David was running for office."

"Did I tell you what a fine man I think you've married?"

"You're a little late with that discovery, Buford. I've been telling you about David for twenty years."

"But I had to see for myself. And I'm perfectly satisfied." He turned toward her in the dusk of the summer house and spoke more confidently than ever. "I want to tell you about John. No, don't draw your hand away. I'm not being naïve in bringing up his name in connection with your husband's. I'm doing it deliberately. You're better off as you are, Faith. John has a meagre temperament. I saw him when I was in Meadville. He was there to try to straighten out Legh's affairs. He doesn't belong to us any more, Faith. He's an important man. He's successful. As head of the Law School at the big University of Templeton he gets all kinds of distinctions. He sits on boards and commissions. He writes extensively and he writes well. But when you talk to him, Faith, you feel that there is no man inside at all. He's like a well-stocked law library that has somehow become vocal and

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ambulatory. He isn't happy. But he doesn't seem to be unhappy. There's just no richness to him. Maybe you could have brought out another aspect. But I don't know. . . . Somehow I felt relieved for you when I saw him."

"I've been very happy in my marriage," Faith heard herself saying primly. It sounded smug and insincere. Suddenly she wanted to tell Buford about all the jokes and all the interests, yes and all the passion that she and David had shared. But he was following his own thread of thought and not criticizing what she said at all.

"I know that you must have been, Faith, because you've remained yourself. You haven't lost the glow that is gone from John. To me, Meadville has always been a dream of something very innocent and intense and idealistic. 'Forever panting and forever young.' You're like that still. So I know your life has been good. John is old . . . old and staid. Perhaps I'm a kind of perennial juvenile. But I like to think that I'm a young man, just starting out to Oxford, just beginning to conquer the world, with everything still before me. That's the way with you too, Faith. There is always another horizon."

Excitement stirred her and made her grip Buford's hand. "That's true. It's my children now. I have four lives instead of one."

"They're fine young people, Faith. I drank my tea a little while ago with my old friend, Irma Morgan. She was telling me about your daughter, Nina. It would have pleased you: what she said. Irma believes that she has shown real originality and a kind of intellectual independence. That's very rare in a girl so young. But it doesn't surprise me in your daughter."

"Nina has developed extraordinarily under Miss Morgan's influence. And Joel is a perfect satisfaction."

"Yes, he's radiant, Faith."

"That's the word I've always used about him, in my own mind. You saw that, Buford! I have to thank you especially for that."

She did not dare to say anything more, for a moment. Her throat seemed to be choked with the unutterable gratitude that she felt to Buford for his sensitiveness and understanding.

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"He's your own child, Faith . . . the one to whom you were entitled."

"Of course, the children are David's and mine together," she corrected Buford. "Though as children grow older even the most closely united family tends to break up into little cliques. The girls have each other; I have Joel; and David has Bruce. There is the most delightful companionship between David and the baby. They're inseparable on Sundays. It's infinitely touching to see them start off for a walk or a launch ride on the lake. That little plump figure! reaching up to cling to the hand of a huge man and neither of them in the least conscious of any incongruity in the picture, but talking as earnestly together as though they were the same age."

"Yes, that's charming."

"With your five children, Buford, you must feel as I do: it's the world, starting all over again. A new chance to do things over and do them better." She felt suddenly guilty and inhospitable. "I've talked only about my children and haven't let you say anything about yours."

Buford laughed.

"My children! They're lovely . . . lovely and amazing and incredibly different from each other. We'll let it go at that until you visit us in California. When you've seen them, I promise to be quite fatuous enough to put you in countenance."

There was a sound at the screen door of the summer house.

"It's Torvald Veblen," a rich voice said. "I'm coming in out of the mosquitoes. That's all right?"

"Of course," Faith called out, "Dr. Waldron and I just ran away from the party to renew our youth."

Judge Veblen sighed luxuriously as he lowered his round little body into a chair.

"You showed good sense. I ran away, too. The insects are bad enough. But the human mosquitoes: they're much worse. Dr. Waldron, what do you think of all this suffrage deviltry?"

"To tell the truth," Buford laughed, "Mrs. Fraser and I have just been confessing to a slightly heretical point-of-view about the cause."

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"Slightly heretical," Judge Veblen snorted. "I should think so. When I came away from that house a big fat woman with yellow hair that God never gave her was screaming and carrying on. I never heard such a yammering."

"It must have been Aurelia Bentley, the actress," Faith explained. "She's appearing at a vaudeville theater in town in *Big Moments From Great Plays*. She volunteered to help with the entertainment today."

"That's the one," Judge Veblen agreed. "In the face she's as white as a sheet except where she's as red as my newly painted barn. Her voice is like a bad day in March when the snow begins to melt . . . and dark patches show where the soot from chimneys has fallen. If she is a great woman leader, then I am Jesus Christ."

Faith wished that Judge Veblen need not be so blunt. Buford would be offended by his lack of taste.

"Mrs. Fraser," the old man went on, "let's you and me start a new religion. There's money in it. And someone ought to tell the world what a vulgar, vicious place it is."

"No, I'm going to claim Mrs. Fraser to support me in my religion," Buford broke in. "We believe that the world will be made fine for our children, by our children."

"If you hope to go on believing that, don't look at the dancing in there." Judge Veblen indicated the house with a thumb, thrust scornfully past Faith's eyes. "I asked my daughter what she called those dances and she said: *The Bunny Hug* and *The Turkey Trot*. It looks as though the young people are going to give us a barnyard civilization. I noticed two of your children doing a nice old-fashioned folk dance, Mrs. Fraser. It was the only decent dancing in the room."

It was just as well, Faith decided, that Judge Veblen did not know the name of the dance that Joel and Judith were probably doing. She had watched them at home doing what they called the *Come to Me, Kid*.

She found herself agreeing secretly with what Judge Veblen said. In many ways the world was becoming vulgarized beyond what it had been at its worst in her own girlhood. All the wonder

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and glamor and mystery of the theater had been dwarfed in a new form of entertainment to something that people called, with unconscious contemptuousness, "the movies." Even Joel who had always loved the theater had begun to clamor to go to see those cheap, animated pictures which were shown in a remodeled bowling alley near Webber's grocery store. Mrs. Veblen had gone to see some of them because she wanted to know whether they were fit for her own children to attend. She reported that she had been able to see very little because the pictures flickered painfully and hurt her eyes. But what she had seen was nauseatingly silly. Faith decided not to mention the movies, feeling sure that Buford would not even have heard of them.

"I wouldn't mind people's getting foolish if they weren't getting wicked at the same time." Judge Veblen spoke with the intentional air of naïvete that characterized his comic style. "They're fixing to have a big show over there in Europe . . . a big noisy circus, in keeping with all the vulgarity of our world."

"You mean there may be serious trouble over the assassination at Sarajevo?" Buford asked, and immediately answered himself: "Surely not. Civilization wouldn't tolerate any nonsense from the Balkans."

It was odd, Faith thought. She had once said the same thing to Waldo Parker when he had predicted a war between England and Germany. She had remembered his warning many times during the last few days. Terribly disturbing news that had been crowding the papers. David had been preoccupied about it. Just today, he had excused himself from Buford and from the garden party to go back to the office. He must be worried. And still it seemed incredible that there could be anything of the sort that Waldo had predicted. What did England have to do with an assassination clear across Europe? Buford must be right. Civilization would not tolerate any real menace to its peace.

"No, it's going to be a big war this time," Judge Veblen insisted.

"Sarajevo is such a charming little town," Buford seemed determined to drive off the specter of fear by bringing the tone of the conversation back to the casual. "I passed through there last summer. It's very gay and pleasant with its towers and minarets.

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It's impossible to think of anything violent happening in such a placid, sleepy atmosphere."

Judge Veblen rose. "My wife will give me the devil if I don't go back to her party. Too bad if I depressed you, Mrs. Fraser. There's a Norwegian saying: 'Lord, seal my lips.' I always think of it too late. I am a damn fool. I am no good."

Faith followed him to the door of the summer house. "We must go back, too, Buford."

The party lasted until after midnight. When Buford left to catch his train, he talked gaily about a meeting in California.

"Now that your children are all in school, surely you can get away for a real visit. We have a bungalow that rambles whimsically over a large part of California. I still keep finding rooms I didn't know were there. You must come and occupy one of them for weeks . . . for months."

Faith pretended to believe that it was a possibility. But things like that did not happen to her. As surely as such a trip were planned one of the children would be sick.

She let Buford kiss her on the cheek as he stepped into the car beside Henrik Veblen. This was the last that she would ever see of Buford. But there would be his letters. Buford really knew that this was the end of a chapter. He released her hand only when the car was actually in motion.

She went back to the Veblen house to wait for David. The fête had been a huge success, Mrs. Veblen announced jubilantly. More than two hundred dollars had been raised to send delegates to Washington to agitate for suffrage with President Wilson.

Everyone else was gone when David came at last. He brought tomorrow morning's Sunday paper and without a word spread it out on the table for them to read. Faith and the Veblens crowded over the page reading the black headlines. Unbelievable things had happened. Germany had declared war on Russia and was gathering troops for an attack.

"It will bring France in," David said. "And England, too. . . ."

"Then Waldo Parker was right," Faith murmured suddenly awe-struck. "You remember what he said one night at our house?"

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"I resent that man's being right," Mrs. Veblen protested and bent, once more, over the paper.

But we're all right, Faith could not help thinking. We're far away. It will be for us to keep civilization from going completely to pieces. Buford is still right. We have to believe in civilization.

She caught at David's arm and drew him to her as she read.

XII

(February, 1915)

NINA ran up the stairs to the landing and collapsed on the window-seat. She simply could not stand another minute of this crazy party. . . . Oh, it was gay! Mother had seen to that. Everyone else was having a wonderful time, including Mother herself. But that was because she chose to ignore all the dreadful overtones and undertones that there were to the gaiety, like echoes of the largo movement intruding into the scherzo.

From the window-seat she could still see the figures in the living room. There was Mother flirting her head off with Beverly. . . . Beverly, le beau. And there was Joel, slumped over the pianola and sobbing, no doubt, as he pumped out the strains of *And When I Tell Them How Wonderful You Are*. Probably in his fourth-rate actor's soul, he was feeling that it was tragically ironic to sit there, playing a gay tune, while his heart was breaking. Nina felt a little sorry for him. He was hysterically jealous of any attention that Mother gave anyone besides himself. Mother had made him the intolerable creature he was, and, now that he was really suffering, she managed to be curiously aloof and cold about it. That damned little adolescent was torturing himself, and Mother, after spoiling him all these years with such overripe tenderness, just looked the other way.

I'm a disagreeable person, Nina thought. Mother has made everyone happy this evening. She treats each of the boys as though she thought he were a young god of intellect. She lets one of them instruct her about electricity and another about how to build an ice-boat and seems practically to swoon with admiration for each in turn. No wonder they like her. She makes them feel important. And she's just the awe-struck little woman who wonders how these big, wonderful men ever found out such extraordinary things. Oh, it isn't as absurd as that! She's dignified and

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reserved and properly mature. Only she will keep on shining, like the Holy Grail. That's it! She's the Holy Grail and all these Galahads and Launcelots are drawn toward her as though toward the essential purity and goodness of their dreams.

Hell! why can't I shut my eyes, the way Mother does, to what I'd rather not see? Forget Joel, snivelling over the pianola. Forget Father, sitting out there in the den, looking so lonely. Forget big, stupid Judith, making the boys laugh at her imitations of the teachers who flunk her in all her courses. Forget Hortense and Eileen Fleming who have no such finesse in flirting as Mother has. They're vulgar, brassy girls even if they do belong to the sacred clan of Winchester. That's because they've spent their entire lives, slipping, slipping, slipping out of respectability. It's all poor Lovatt's fault. . . . Lovatt, the lotus-eater! No, it's partly Aunt Kathie's fault, too. She's a kind of coquettish bromide, with pious implications. Her head is bloody, but unbowed. Women who go around priding themselves on the fact that their heads are bloody but unbowed never feel any obligation to keep their hairpins in place. And poor, darling Eunice and Dorothy Simpson! They cower in corners because their mother has brought them up to believe that they can become pregnant if they permit a man to give them so much as one leering look. Oh golly! what life does to people! Hell! Hell! Hell!

Bernard Buholtz came up the stairs and seated himself beside her.

"I told you you were a snob," he said; "you can't even be polite to the guests at your own party."

Nina sighed. Here was a hyper-intelligent fool to be dealt with!

"Oh Bernard! you're more understanding than that. Why don't you put my aloofness down to the fact that I'm not a social success?"

"There's an element of that in it, of course. You're jealous of your mother."

"I adore my mother." Bernard had no right to root around in her mind this way, but since he had impudently begun, he might as well know the whole truth. "She has never cared much for me because I'm queer . . . streaky, she has always said. I get

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even by seeing what's fabulous and overdone in her. But I continue to think that she's the most remarkable person in the world. As, of course, she is."

"That all belongs to a very familiar psychological pattern."

"Oh, you and your psychology! Sometimes, Bernard, I wish that you had got trapped into finishing your study for the ministry. You're so smug: It would have served you right if you had had to get up in church once a month and chant the Litany tremulously, not believing a word of it. Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

"I can't help being smug. It's because I'm so surprised at finding that I have a mind. If you'd been the child of the village drunk . . . if you'd once been in juvenile court . . . and then suddenly discovered that you were unusually bright, it would go to your head, too. As it is, you've got a pride of intellect like the devil himself. We're a couple of fallen angels, Nina."

"You needn't link me with yourself in that respect, Bernard."

"Or in anything else, I suppose. You see you're proving what I say. You're a snob."

"It doesn't seem to me your psychology has done you much good. You don't keep things straight at all. I refused to be called a fallen angel, because I never was an angel and I had no secure place to fall from. I was being humble, not proud."

Bernard looked at her searchingly. His bullet head covered with short-cropped blond hair was thrust toward her aggressively. But after a moment, he dropped his eyes and went on with an air of embarrassment.

"I know I'm confused. I have a terrible sense of inferiority because my family was poor and we were always in disgrace. But do you know what was worse than that? When Mr. Collins adopted me and sent me to college to study for the ministry, it didn't take me long to discover that I had no faith. He treated me like an ingrate when I told him I couldn't go on. I sort of thought of myself as an ingrate, too. But that didn't give me any belief in religion."

"I used to hate you in church, Bernard, when I went to hear Joel sing solos. You looked like a stupid German saint."

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"I hated myself worse."

"You used to let all the choir boys maul you because it made you feel like Jesus, on the cross, or something."

"Who told you that, Nina?"

"Joel. He thought you were marvelous. Heavens, the pious talk I've had to listen to from Joel when we went to symphony concerts together. You know when Mr. Collins gave up his Episcopal order and got married, Joel was just about ready to die of shock."

Bernard turned toward her gravely.

"Someone ought to do something for Joel. He's developing a mother fixation."

Nina stiffened. Bernard Buholtz must have noticed that Joel was jealous of Mother. He couldn't help realizing, just as she herself did, that it wasn't right for a boy as old as Joel to be tied to his mother's apron strings. The unfamiliar phrase that Bernard had used seemed to put a sharper edge to her own perception. She felt as though she had been struck through by it. But she had to be loyal to the family. She would not admit that he was right.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Bernard."

"You're so shrewd, Nina. I sometimes forget that you don't know everything I know."

Really, he was impossible, with his vulgar sense of possessing the entire world of learning. He was a sort of *nouveau riche* in intellectual society.

She faced him, laughing openly.

"You talk like a little boy who boasts: 'I've got a pony.' It should occur to a person as clever as you that there is a whole circus full of ponies that you don't exclusively own and operate."

His humiliation was almost too complete to be satisfying.

"Honestly, I meant only about Freud, Nina. He invented the phrase: mother fixation."

"I've never heard of him."

"Stick around for twenty years and you will. The news will leak out gradually."

The piano roll had been changed. Joel was pumping out: You

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Need Sympathy. Worse and worse! He probably felt that the words were addressed directly to him.

Mr. Howard came up the stairs. He bounded, rather, with the lope of a self-conscious gazelle. It was the same sprightly action that he used on the tennis court to show that he was just as young as anyone and much more graceful.

"Oh, I've found you at last, Miss Nina," he said. "You were going to teach me the Maxixe."

Damn Bernard, anyway! He didn't have sense enough to know that he was supposed to stand while an older man did. Well, she wasn't going to compete with Mother for the attentions of Beverly, le beau. Probably Mother had tactfully suggested that Beverly come to find her.

"I'm afraid I can't dance any more, Mr. Howard. I had a fall on the ice this afternoon and strained my ankle."

He would know that she couldn't have fallen. She skated too well. But it made no difference, if only he would take his beautiful face and his beautiful English accent far, far away.

"Oh sorry," he was saying. "But I understand, quite. Perhaps you and Mr. Buholtz will let me sit with you."

"But you dance so well, Mr. Howard. It would be a shame to keep you from the floor. Bernard dances like the *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. He doesn't mind sitting with me."

When Mr. Howard had gone, Bernard said: "I hate that suave bloke."

"There's nothing wrong with suavity, is there?" Her protest, Nina realized, was directed toward herself, rather than toward Bernard. She was horrid to Mr. Howard really because she liked him so much. In the old days, when he used to come to Mother's Sunday evenings, she had had a silly daydream about him. He had made her think he liked her when he would come sometimes on Friday afternoons to take her skating.

Later, at the University he had invited her to several dances. Once she had invited him to a party at the Theta Kappa house. But the other girls had been terribly afraid of him, and she hadn't dared to repeat that experiment. Nina had actually contracted a kind of fear of Beverly from the other Thetas.

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Then when Miss Morgan had begun to talk to her about him and laugh at his immaculateness and his perfectionism, Nina had laughed, too, with a kind of slavish reverence. She wanted to share all of Miss Morgan's attitudes. Nina had invented the nickname, Beverly, le beau. Miss Morgan took it up and it had given them both a kind of secret delight to share a joke. Nina had sacrificed Beverly on the altar of her worship of Miss Morgan and now the whole thing was spoiled. She no longer admired Miss Morgan as much as she had once. It had gone to her head to have Miss Morgan admire her themes. But now Nina saw that the teacher was a meagre, rather spiteful old maid. But repudiating Miss Morgan didn't give Beverly back to her.

Anyway, it had been ridiculous to think of marrying Beverly. Obviously he was not going to marry anyone. He must have been pursued by lots of girls. But he had eluded them all. If she herself married, it would probably be someone like Bernard.

I'll marry superciliously, she thought, because I really have so little respect for myself. And I'll hide it by picking someone rather gauche and improbable.

Bernard was speaking in that funny guttural way of his which revealed the fact that he had spoken German at home when he was a child. He was clinging doggedly to the theme that Beverly's appearance had suggested.

"You're not afraid of suavity because you've been surrounded by it, always. I was brought up in an atmosphere where people tossed pots of scalding water on each other when they wished to express a slight pique."

His humility exasperated her. It was no wonder, of course, that he hated his memories of the home life he had lived. But why need he go on forever torturing himself with them? In spite of all of his efforts to be hardheaded and realistic, he wove romances about the background of other people and tried to make their world seem better than it actually had been. It appeared to Nina that she had an obligation to show him that he need not be so worshipful of what other people's lives had been. It might make him feel more secure to know that she, too, had experienced a sense of insecurity.

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"Oh, Bernard," she protested, "you have such a lot of crazy notions! Just because you were born in a little house back there where the mill workers live, you think it's marvelous to be allowed to enter this house. . . . I wish I could make you see, really, what life in this house has been like. . . . It's a sort of shabby castle where we have vibrated between comfort and poverty as dismal as any you've ever known. Worse, because it had to be concealed. It had to be genteel and self-respecting. I can remember moments like that when I was a child. And I remember being absolutely congealed by fear."

She paused, feeling painfully excited. It seemed disloyal to Father to make a confession like that to a boy from back there in the woods. But if it could help Bernard, what difference did it make? And anyway she was launched on the subject now. Her tongue wouldn't stop even if she tried to make it.

"My Father's been in public life. All right! That made him an important person. It made me an important person by reflection of his glory. Just how long did it make us important? Just as long as he was noticeable. At other times we've been nobody. We were never closely united to other people. Certainly not to the rich people who indulgently entertained us when we were on top. And just as certainly not to the people among whom we've lived. They admired us a little in our shabby castle and resented us a lot. They've thought we were snobs, just as you always have. And actually we've been lonely. It hasn't been so hard on my Mother because she has always been buoyed up by the sense of having a great destiny. She creates what she calls the excellent life out of any materials that come to her hands. If she happens to feel that she has power, that's fine. If she knows that she has nothing but poverty, that's not so bad because it's a challenge to her to carve out a new kind of gallant destiny for herself and for my Father. But I've had none of that. I don't even know what Mother means by the excellent life. I haven't had an excellent life. I've been lonely and stubborn and queer and pursued by all kinds of fears. It's all come about because I've had a chaotic life, just as you have. I've never known how to live or what I was supposed to be or even who I was. Sometimes I've thought I

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was a changeling, as Mother says . . . an orphan . . . someone they picked up back there in the woods."

To her intense irritation she found that she was crying. She hadn't meant to fling herself into a hog-wallow of self-pity. Right now, she blamed herself, more than anyone else for her misery. It had been a mistake to pull out the cork that had bottled up her fears. Now she was lost. She had given her weakness an excuse to express itself in tears. She had always hated tears. Judith, sobbing over her imaginary aches and pains, had set a horrible example of vulgar, ostentatious misery. And here she was, sobbing in the presence of a comparative stranger, over aches and pains even more imaginary.

She felt Bernard's hand on her own. "I love you, Nina," he said.

Really, that was the limit of everything! She rose.

"Is that all you have to say to me, Bernard? I've tried to show you that you're not the only person who has always had to feel that he had no solid ground under his feet, and you make it an excuse for trying to start a campus romance."

He was standing beside her, obviously confused.

"But I mean it," he protested meekly.

"Oh, I've no doubt you are enjoying your emotions. But I've heard too many Thetas moaning, around about the tender understanding they get from boys, to believe very much in what has happened to us, now. You sit in a dark corner, two by two, and tell each other that no one has ever appreciated you. That leads to a kiss and that leads to an engagement which lasts about one week . . . until there's another dance and someone else to moan over and kiss and get engaged to. I'm thoroughly ashamed of both of us."

The piano suddenly stopped in the middle of one of the rolls. Then Joel leaped up the stairs and disappeared. There was a buzz of surprised chatter in the living room. Judith appeared in the hall with Henrik Veblen, calling to Joel to come back and not be a spoil-sport.

"You go play the pianola for them, Bernard." Nina turned from him and followed Joel upstairs.

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He was lying on his bed, smothering his hysterics in the pillow. But that wouldn't last long. When he discovered that he was getting an unsatisfactory amount of attention, he'd let them hear him downstairs. He would scream, the way he had once before when Mr. Howard was calling on Mother. Father had been playing chess with Judge Veblen, and Mother did not send for him to come home. She had seen Beverly alone.

"What's the matter with you, you little fool?" Nina demanded.

Joel writhed on his bed. "She doesn't love me any more . . . she doesn't love me any more."

"Can you think of any good reason why she should?"

She hadn't meant to be spiteful. But the image of Joel was too revolting to be endured. At her taunt, he flung the pillow to the floor and sobbed noisily.

"Do you want them to hear you downstairs?"

"Yes, I want them to hear me! I want her to hear me. I want her to know what she's done to me."

She'll never know that, Nina thought. Mother is incapable of understanding how she has spoiled this terrible, terrible boy. In her mind, he will simply become a changeling, like me, who has betrayed all the fine ideals she has had for him.

Poor Joel! Poor Mother! She had tried so hard to make this party a success. Joel must be prevented from ruining it.

She remembered that a douche of cold water in the face sometimes ended hysterics. Deliberately she picked up and uncorked the water bottle that stood beside Joel's bed. But as she prepared to throw it, he made a convulsive movement. His forehead struck the sharp edge of the bottle. Blood burst from the wound, over his coat, over the bedspread.

Nina ran toward the bathroom for a towel. At the threshold of Joel's room stood Mother, looking frightened. She snatched a scarf from the bureau and ran to Joel.

"What happened? Oh, my poor darling boy."

"I don't think he's hurt much. I tried to quiet his hysterics. There was an accident."

"You've given him a scar he'll carry to his grave," Mother said in her best Bernhardt manner.

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It might do him some good if he could exchange that scar for some you've given him, Nina thought, as she went to the bathroom to get alcohol and bandages.

When she returned she found Joel's door closed. She could hear Mother murmuring gently inside. She put the tray of medicines beside the door, knocked, and went downstairs to the party.

XIII

(September, 1916)

FAITH stood up and surveyed the top shelf of the trunk. She had done a thoroughly good job of packing. Everything was there, not crowded and yet put in so neatly that there was no room for rattling about. She had been dismayed, at first, by the number of things that had to be accounted for. But they were all there. You put a trunkful of goods together just as you did an editorial or a poem. If you were discreet and had foresight and knew the tricks of compression you could get it all in.

Yes, everything was there. . . . Everything that was Joel. All his clothes, the new things and the old; the very personal garments like the gloves that fell into the shape of his hand when they were dropped onto the table; and the impersonal things like rubbers that Joel had tried hard to leave out. She had packed it all up and was sending it away. Tomorrow, he would leave her for months and months. There was even a question about whether he would come home from Harvard for the Christmas holidays or go to New York to see the plays. She would miss him, miss him cruelly.

But she mustn't think of that. He would have a wonderful experience. It wouldn't be too foreign for him, she hoped. After all, he was to room with Erik Veblen, and they had known each other always.

Still, all the reasonable arguments that she could muster seemed insufficient to justify this sacrifice. She wanted to kneel again on the floor and take everything from the trunk, scatter it around in a friendly and familiar look of disorder. There was something so monstrous about gathering together all the belongings of a child you loved and putting them away from you where you could see them and touch them no more. It seemed like an appalling gesture of finality. And, of course, it was the end of

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something: the end of Joel's childhood. He would never again belong to her quite as he had, in the past.

Bruce came stomping into Joel's room. The sturdy figure of the eight-year-old boy always made Faith smile. In his self-reliance and aggressiveness, Bruce seemed like a diminutive caricature of essential masculinity.

The child surveyed the room with evident satisfaction.

"When Joel's gone," he announced, "I shall move in here."

"All right, darling. Only let's not hurry Joel more than we need."

The subtle protest was quite wasted upon Bruce who was concentrating closely on his own plans.

"Father and I will have much more room for working on my Mecano set in here than we had in that little bitta room I used to have."

Bruce had been taking possession of his father more and more. There were fewer Sundays, now, when David could go to play chess with Judge Veblen. It did not matter very much perhaps. Chess had become an interest of secondary importance with them after the war began. Now that it had dragged on so incredibly, they had both become a little weary of discussing it. Bruce had taken Judge Veblen's place, completely. He absorbed David's Sunday afternoons and evenings as well as his mornings. It was touching to see David's big clumsy hands trying to manage the tiny bolts and screws of the Mecano set. He didn't know how to solve the engineering problems as well as the child, and it charmed him to take patronizing orders from his son. They were a delightful pair.

David will still have Bruce and I shan't have Joel, Faith thought in a kind of panic. I shall need something else to take my attention. But there had never been any real trouble about that. Of course, there can never be anything half as good as Joel. But I mustn't be unreasonable. After all, I've had him for seventeen years.

"Do you think you could squeeze in one thing more, Mother?"

Joel flashed his most beguiling smile as he dropped down beside her the elephantine scrapbook in which he had kept his

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theater programs. It was a model of thoroughness, with pictures of the stars pasted beside the programs.

"Oh Son, do you think you really have to have that?" Faith protested.

"It's sort of a reference book, Mother. I get lots of themes out of it."

"Well then, I suppose we must find a place."

"Of course, you could take out those rubbers."

"No, we won't go into that again, my dear. I'll find a place."

Bruce came lumbering across the room, the whole second floor of the house cringing and groaning under his footfall.

"When you go, Joel, I'm going to move in here."

Joel caught his plump little brother into his arms. He was feeling already the traveler's adventuresome exuberance, and it made him unusually demonstrative toward Bruce.

"I suppose you'd like to throw me out, right now. You'll go and get your policeman's club and drive me out this minute."

"Say, I wouldn't use that good club on any old head like yours," Bruce protested, struggling in his brother's arms. "That club was made from the mast of the battleship Maine, and it was given to Father when he was Mayor of Drummond. It's too valuable to run any risks with."

"That's the rather improbable legend," Joel said, putting Bruce down on his feet once more.

"It's a true fact," Bruce insisted.

Faith listened with a rueful amusement to this passage between her sons. Bruce had an innocently assertive way of dramatizing the closeness of his relationship to his father. He had inherited all the Spanish-American war trinkets given David by the returning Twenty-Third Infantry. Though Joel would have had no use for them at all, he was painfully aware of the fact that possessing them gave a much younger brother a point of superiority over him. They had had this same little battle over and over again. But while she sat covertly studying their faces, Faith saw Joel's brow clear.

"Of course, it's a true fact," he agreed. "You have a wonderful

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collection. If I were you, I'd put all your treasures right up there on the mantel piece, when you move into this room."

He has matured, Faith thought. He can make a man's concession to a child, now. The prospect of going away to be on his own responsibility has done that for him. Ever since he knew that he was to go to Harvard, he has seemed years older. He has dropped all the foolish jealousy that he used to feel about me. Even Nina, who has always been so antagonistic toward him, admits that he has grown up. He has always been mature, intellectually. His high school essay, as valedictorian, was really brilliantly original. I helped him with it only a very little. But now he's mature, emotionally, as well.

Nina called up from the hall. "Where is everybody?"

"In Joel's room, darling," Faith answered. "Packing his trunk."

Nina's long legs brought her up the stairs quickly. She stood in the doorway looking down at the preparations as though they surprised her.

"Why you horrible little beast," she exclaimed making a feint at Joel's chin with her clenched fist. "I actually believe I'm sorry to see you go."

"It's pitiful," Joel laughed. "You'll have no intellectual stimulation after I'm gone."

"I ought to give your ears a particularly painful Dutch rub, just for old times' sake," Nina warned.

Then, suddenly, she sent her hat sailing across the room.

"But I feel too good. Everything's settled, Mother. I'm to have Miss Morgan's papers in Freshman English to correct. It will pay for my tuition so that my M.A. won't cost Father anything except, of course, what I cost at home."

"But that's wonderful, darling." She took Nina into her arms. "Mother's good child! You've always been such a credit to me."

"Not always."

"Yes, always."

Faith hated the memory of the doubts she had once had of Nina. It wasn't fair that those things should be remembered. Nina had been born during the years when she was overworked and terribly tired. She hadn't been a healthy baby. The adjust-

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ment had been difficult, all the way. But she had always known that Nina had a distinct trace of talent and now she was beginning to justify that faith.

"Yes, always, darling," she repeated. "When I've seemed harsh. . . . It was just because Mother wanted you to put forward your very best efforts. You're a wonderful child to Mother."

"Oh kiss Joel, too. He's your best bet, still."

Faith gathered Joel under her other arm.

"And me," Bruce demanded. "Me, too."

"Yes, you and Father make the best Meco models in the world. All my dear good children! . . . Where's Judith?" she asked suddenly, aware that the circle was not complete.

"She didn't come home with me," Nina answered. "There was a stupid play at the stock company and she insisted on going to it. She was very much annoyed because I wouldn't go with her. But I was too anxious to get home and tell you my good news."

"Darling, I'm glad you wanted to come home. I can't tell you how happy you've made me. Mother has planned for you children always . . . wanted you to have the excellent life. And now you're making it for yourselves. That's the best news I could possibly have."

The telephone rang in the hall downstairs.

"Shall I answer it, Mother?" Joel asked.

"No, Mary's in the kitchen." Faith started to close the lid of Joel's trunk.

"Don't close it yet," Nina protested. "I have a package to go in."

"Oh good heavens, Nina! There isn't an inch of space. What is it?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise. I just made him a sweater for his room, or skating or whatever. . . ." She was acutely embarrassed at this betrayal of her secret affection for her brother.

"Well, of course, that has to go in!" Joel exclaimed. "Now, Mother, if you'll just be reasonable about those rubbers. . . ."

She cut him short. "Joel, that telephone is still ringing. Perhaps you'd better answer it."

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A moment later, Joel called from downstairs: "It's only Mr. Richards from Father's office, Mother. He wants to speak to you."

It was a nuisance to have to speak to Mr. Richards at a moment like this. He was such a polite little old man! Whenever he called to say that David would be detained downtown, he felt that he must inquire for the health of the entire family. It took forever to get rid of him without hurting his feelings.

"Yes, Mr. Richards?" she said briskly.

The plaintive quality of the old man's voice sounded more than usually dim. "Is this Mrs. Fraser?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Richards. You want to tell me something about Mr. Fraser?"

"Yes, Ma'am, I do. You see, he came in from lunch at the Commercial Club about three-quarters of an hour ago. And I heard him in his office having some trouble with his stomach, you know, like he often does."

"I know. . . . I know. . . . Mr. Richards." Over her shoulder she began to call to Nina. Mr. Richards must talk his rambling explanation out to someone else. David was ill and she must get to him. "Nina," she called again.

"I blame myself for not going in to him right away. But you know how he has that gas on his stomach all the time. I've got so I don't think anything of it, any more than he does."

"Mr. Richards, you're trying to tell me that he's ill, aren't you? Have they taken him to the hospital?"

Nina appeared at her side and whispered: "What is it, Mother? Shall I take the telephone?" Faith waved her away.

"No, they haven't taken him to the hospital. You see it wasn't any use. If I'd known how it was, I'd have gone in there right away instead of waiting to take the pay-roll in for him to sign. But he has that trouble with his stomach right along. And I didn't think a thing of it."

Before she had become conscious of any other emotional experience, Faith felt rather idiotically tossed about on waves of incredulity. It couldn't be. It simply couldn't. Why, she had always been sure that she would die before David! There were so many ways in which a woman could die. Childbirth, for example. Of

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course, she would die before him. It was nonsense to think anything else. No David, sitting opposite her at dinner telling her the day's jokes? No David, wooing her out of her anxieties over the children? No David sitting on the floor in Bruce's room working at the Meco? Oh no, no. It was patently absurd; Mr. Richards was just being silly.

Then, suddenly, she realized that no one could be so cruel as to play upon her sensibilities needlessly . . . no one and nothing, but life itself. A paralyzing fear stiffened her body.

"Mr. Richards, what are you trying to tell me? Is he . . . is he gone?"

"Yes Ma'am, I'm afraid, he's gone."

She heard her voice saying over and over again: "Oh no . . . no. . . ."

Presently it seemed ridiculous to stand there holding the telephone receiver any longer. She replaced it and turned away. Nina and Joel and Bruce were standing near her, side by side. Nina and Joel were crying. Bruce looked awe-struck and appalled.

She saw that they knew and also that it would be a kindness to end the pathetic little hope to which they clung.

"Children, your father is dead," she stated unfalteringly.

IV

EVENING

"That full star that ushers in the even. . . ."

II

(April, 1917)

AS she rose to leave the streetcar, Faith went through the routine of listing her impedimenta. . . . Money (1), gloves (2), handkerchief (3), brief-case (4), book (5), umbrella (6), flowers (7). . . . Yes, she had everything. Becoming eccentric, she thought with a kind of rueful amusement. But that was not quite fair. Since she had remodelled herself into an automatic, self-starting combination of father, mother and bread-winner, it had been necessary to develop a system for handling the thousand details of the daily routine. She could not carry them all in her head at once.

So many details! she thought wearily, and such a confused head to put them in! Her day began at six o'clock when she prepared breakfast for the family. Theoretically, Judith was the housekeeper. But Judith had no gift for organization at all. Without help, she required hours to get a meal on the table. And then it was nearly inedible. Nina tried to help. But she walked to the University to save money, and that meant getting an early start. To increase the family income she had taken work in the library in addition to her work as Miss Morgan's assistant. Joel and Bruce were eager to be useful. But they simply got underfoot in the tiny kitchen of the apartment. Cooking had, in the end, become Faith's job along with everything else.

Then, the day in the office began. She had had to learn to do an entirely new kind of work. It had not been easy to adjust herself to the people in the department store. Everyone was solicitous and reassuring. But the strain of the past six months had been acute, nonetheless. What she had worried about particularly was whether or not she could learn to write successful advertising copy.

She had succeeded, thank heaven! The teasing paragraphs about

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clothes which were printed in the papers, as though they were news items, had caught even Mrs. Veblen's eye. Only at the end of the last line where the abbreviation, adv., appeared was the sly game exposed. Mrs. Veblen had told Faith how irritated she had been to find herself reading a neatly worded statement about the importance of being well-dressed only to discover at last that it was, "one of Lady Fraser's shameless traps for the unwary and impressionable."

"You'll goad even me into extravagance," Mrs. Veblen added.

The president of the company had been pleased with her innovation. He had raised her salary \$5 a week after the first month. That brought the total amount to \$40 and, even with what Nina added, it was little enough. But there was the money from the house and the furniture to tide them over. It did not really matter if all the extra funds were spent in the next four years. By that time Nina would be teaching; Judith would be married, perhaps; and Joel would be out of college. That would leave only Bruce to be cared for. Surely, she could manage his education on what she could earn.

Standing on the platform, waiting for the car to stop, Faith caught a glimpse of herself in the motorman's mirror. She had changed. David would scarcely know her. She wondered if what she had done to herself was really effective. Not that she had done it willingly. The saleswomen at the store had insisted on all the "modern improvements." Even though Faith was tucked away in a small, remodelled fitting-room and seldom seen by the public, she was required to be a credit to the establishment. Miss Barnes had insisted on the "transformation," intended to conceal the fact that Faith's own hair was becoming perilously thin. Miss Orton, of the gown department, had made her chic in a set of tailored dresses. It was Miss Orton who had shown her the technique of applying rouge.

Faith suspected that all the effort was wasted. She could never make her face the competent work-of-art that Miss Orton made of her own. The words of a nonsense verse that David had often recited came into her mind:

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Now I've been thinking of a plan
To dye my whiskers green;
And then to use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.

She might try that system. But fans were out of style. Miss Orton would never allow it.

Still, the thought of David seemed to rebuke the arrogant stranger in the motorman's glass. It's only a mask, David, she thought. I have to have its protection.

The same defense had flashed through her mind on the day when Miss Orton had held up the mirror to show her how "gorgeous" she had become under treatment. It was only a mask. But the effect, at that first glance, had been to make her collapse into tears.

"Look," Miss Orton had said brusquely, "you're not the crying type. You got a nose like a . . . well, like a general. My dear, live up to your nose!"

Well, hadn't she lived up to it! She had held the great granite thing very firmly to the grindstone for seven months, now. It seemed to show few signs of wear.

Faith walked briskly through the gates of Woodlawn cemetery. Its lovely maze had become familiar to her, after many visits. She knew the way directly to the grave. The first spring flowers had looked beautiful in the florists' windows, when she walked out for lunch. She could not resist the temptation to bring these daffodils to David, even though she should not have left the office for another two hours.

"And then my heart with laughter fills, And dances with the daffodils." Only it did not dance, really. It had never been much of a dancing heart. Now there was hardly an exuberant skip left in it.

Nonsense! she rebuked herself, sternly. That sentimentality was unworthy of herself and, certainly, it was unworthy of her memory of David. The truth was that all of her new responsibilities excited her. Everything that belonged to the past was gone, except the children. The house was gone; the old friends, . . . It was

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like beginning again. When she took the apartment, near Margaret and Kathie, she had thought of the first arrival in Drummond. Here she was, back on these dreary streets, full of decaying houses. No farther ahead than before! A life still to create! . . . But that phrase had always stimulated her imagination. It was good to have everything to begin again. She must make the excellent life for her children. Nina and Joel were intelligent human beings, thank heaven! To them she could pass on the inspiration and the belief that she had received from her own father. While there was work to do she could never be wholly unhappy.

She climbed the knoll. The site had appealed to her because it was like the Winchester lot in Meadville. It was beautiful. But sometimes she resented the beauty of this place. It did David no good. "The grave's a fine and private place." She had liked the line when Buford quoted it to describe Papa's secure retreat. But David was different. He had never wanted a private place. Always, he had worked in confusion, lived in confusion. And he loved it. Oh no, this was no place for David. And, surely, he wasn't here . . . all of his laughter quieted! all of his love of company denied! . . . It must be fine for people who could believe in the resurrection and the life everlasting. . . . But David did have life! she thought passionately. While she herself still had life, David shared it. David was in her heart.

A woman was standing near the grave. Faith did not know her. She was probably someone looking for another lot. As Faith climbed the knoll, the other woman moved away and disappeared. There were fresh flowers near the marker. But that was not strange. There must be many people among David's old friends who would bring him flowers whenever they visited their own family lots.

Faith knelt on the ground to arrange her daffodils and immediately began whispering to David. Another eccentricity! But what did it matter, if it gave her comfort?

Darling, we're getting along all right. You're not to worry. You'd be proud of your children . . . most of them. Joel was such a mature creature during all that time when I needed mental support so terribly! He didn't mind giving up Harvard. He thought

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he would have to give up college altogether and go to work. But all of your old friends at the University were so good about arranging a scholarship there. They've made it quite easy.

The thought of Joel intruded between her and David. It had been such a strange experience: the way the news of David's death had come. She remembered thinking how hard it was to pack away all of her son's belongings and send him off to college. She had longed to empty his trunk and not let him go. . . . And that was precisely what she had done, at last. She had unpacked Joel's belongings and put away David's, instead. David's death had come like a punishment for her greed. . . . Queer! queer! what a firm grip the old theological notions kept on one's imagination. She did not really believe that God leaned vindictively from his throne to punish her for what was, after all, a natural emotion. Yet the circumstances constantly made her feel as though she were suffering retribution for her too great love of Joel.

David! she went on, I have so many problems. You know how I always fretted and worried. I'm still doing it, my darling. And I've still no one to help me, no one but you. . . . I don't want Nina to marry Bernard Buholtz. He isn't worthy of her. I keep telling her that all the time. Bernard is so brash and assertive and ordinary. You know what the Buholtzes were. It would be so much better if Nina could care for Beverly. I tell her that as often as I can. But she sees Bernard constantly. Do you remember my saying once that Spinoza had seduced my imagination? Bernard has done that to Nina. How can I stop it, David? . . . I wish I knew.

And Judith, darling. You were so right about her. I've thought so often of what you once said. "Nina and Joel are intellectual aristocrats; Judith is a plebeian." She is, David. There's nothing I can do to hold her up to the standards of the others. I still try. I try desperately. But Judith has no pride. I've nothing to work on. She hates our family standards, and interests, and traditions. Sometimes, I almost think she hates me. Do you remember how desperate you used to be with her, whenever you tried to explain arithmetic problems? She only wanted you to give her

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the answer. She didn't care why it was the answer. How did we ever happen to have a child like that?

But your darling Bruce is all right. He's handsome and sturdy and humorous, like you . . . just like you, David. Right now, he's very busy hating women. You should hear him scolding the women-drivers of automobiles. But I don't worry. That phase will pass, because he has good-will, like you.

Darling, I didn't mean to worry you about Nina and Judith. But it does me good to talk. You know, it always did. Our quarrels were really nothing more than arguing our way out of problems. You used to say: "Faith, you can always lecture yourself into a good humor." . . . Oh my darling, if I could hear you say it once more. . . . Just once more.

She rose, blinded by her tears, and started stumbling down the knoll. It was no use staying any longer. She could not afford to have hysterics. That always brought on a headache.

As she stepped into the automobile drive, someone touched her arm. It was so unexpected that she almost cried out. A woman stood before her.

"Mrs. Fraser?" she said.

"Yes."

Faith saw that it was the same one who had been near David's grave. She was stocky and middle-aged. A mass of iron-gray hair was crowded under too small a hat. She shouldn't wear a hat like that, Faith thought; and then laughed inwardly, as she realized that she was becoming style-conscious. . . . How absurd!

"I've been waiting for you to come down from the knoll. I'm Estelle Harvey."

She stared fixedly as though she expected some sign of recognition. Then, realizing that Faith was puzzled, she went on in a rush:

"I don't know why I expected that to mean something to you. There's no reason why it should. But I used to know your husband a long time ago."

"Oh, Estelle Harvey!" Faith said aloud. "Of course! I do remember."

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The woman smiled uncomfortably. "I don't know quite what you remember about me. But I had an impulse to wait and speak to you. Perhaps it was foolish."

"Oh, no, no!" Faith said. She finished the thought to herself: You once made David unhappy by refusing to marry him. That cannot hurt him any more . . . or me, either. It can only hurt you. Why shouldn't you speak of it, if you like?

It was obvious that Miss Harvey was more than a little unhappy. She spoke haltingly, with the terrible effort of a weary teacher to whom the sound of her own voice has become unpleasant.

"I'm a school-teacher. The cemetery is a short-cut for me from work to the place where I live. Today, one of my pupils brought me flowers. Her mother had had a party last night. I was taking them home. And then I thought of David Fraser and decided to leave the flowers here. I hope you don't mind."

Faith stretched out her hand. It was impossible not to feel sorry for this lonely woman who had wanted David when it was too late. To her, he was still an ideal creature, worshipped in an elderly woman's imagination. It was pitiful to see Estelle Harvey's school-teacher rigidity, trying to melt . . . and trying to melt Faith at the same time.

"Of course, I don't mind. I like to remember that he had so many friends."

"So many!" Miss Harvey spoke with a kind of half-stifled ecstasy. "There has never been anything in Drummond like his funeral. It was as though he were some great public official. And did you know that the flags on all the public schools were at half-mast? That has never been done before, in honor of a private citizen."

There was something unbearably touching about Miss Harvey's pride. For Faith, the tributes paid to David, at the time of his death, had had a bitter taste. The people who poured into the church . . . the ones who ordered flags to be put at half-mast . . . were, many of them, the same ones who had made him suffer. They had voted him out of office; they had humiliated him; they had made his life come to nothing. Then, they expected to put things right, in the end, by mourning him conspicuously.

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Their grief was for the loss of their pet clown. They had not appreciated him.

Miss Harvey had given up the effort to keep her composure. Tears streamed down her face. . . . She'll consider me a hard woman because I can't cry over the flags, Faith thought. . . . But Miss Harvey was too engrossed in her own emotion to think of the emotions of anyone else.

"I liked what the minister said at the funeral about David's being 'the knight of the spilling cup.' He was like that. He held out his cupped hands and all that they held slipped through his fingers to refresh other people."

Faith gripped Estelle Harvey's hand. This woman had loved David . . . loved him passionately, exclusively . . . and all that she had ever had of him was a brief moment of his youth.

"There is something more I want to say to you," Miss Harvey went on. "It's rather personal. Shall I say it, or would you rather I shouldn't?"

"Oh no . . . go on."

"Perhaps David never told you. But I might have married him once. I was just beginning my career as a teacher. I thought I wanted to work things out alone. I regretted it, afterward. That doesn't matter now. But there is something very strange about the way I felt. I've had to go on living in the same city with him, knowing that he had a wife who was better for him than I should ever have been. That was horrible for me . . . horrible, and yet, I've been glad. It's all mixed up."

More mixed up than you realize, Faith thought. The good and the bad in a confused tangle! Gladness and grief; hope and fear. Nothing ever comes out straight and simple. . . . Nothing.

"You were able to do much more for David than I could have managed to do, however hard I might have tried. That is because you have vision."

Faith said nothing. In this praise, she found a rebuke. Once she had had vision for David. That was true. But the vision had faded. After so many trials and so many failures, it had become dimmed. In the end, it had quite disappeared. During the last years of David's life, she had no longer been clearly aware of him.

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So many other things had intervened: the house, the children. . . . Even Beverly Howard had been more real to her. There had never been any intensity to her feeling for Beverly. He had slipped back, long since, into his rôle as one of her bright, promising children. But all those casual concerns had kept her from David. . . . Did he know? Had he been lonely?

Absent-mindedly, she took Miss Harvey's arm. They walked toward the cemetery gates.

There was no good in thinking of the past any more. She could do nothing for David now, except to help his children. Nina and Judith, Joel and Bruce, each must have the life his father would have wanted him to have.

"I'm so glad to have seen you," Miss Harvey was saying. "You've been a kind of ideal to me, always, of what a well-disciplined woman can manage to be. I've followed your work in the paper. We have a few friends in common who talk about you. One of them is Mrs. Veblen. I've met her in suffrage work. . . . I can't tell you what it has meant to me just to say to you the things I've wanted to say for a long time."

Faith pressed Miss Harvey's hand once more. She could not answer. There was a scorching irony to every word the other woman spoke.

If I had only managed to be what I meant to be, Faith thought, I might have deserved this praise. But, as Miss Harvey said, things got so mixed up. What became of vision? Why did it fade?

A line from a poem of Leopardi crossed her mind. She had quoted it in her last paper for the Scholar Gypsies. It had been like an echo, coming from the distant past to express, for her, her own despair. . . . "I know not how I lost my clear white light."

Well, one had to get on with one's work even when there was no longer a clear white light. One had to grope one's way by the memory of the places where the light once had fallen.

At the gate, Faith's ear caught the sound of newsboys' shrill voices, calling the evening paper. There was something portentous in their clamor. For once there was an authentic ring to their professional hysteria.

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She hurried Miss Harvey across the street. They stood looking at the black headlines. In the largest possible type, the incredible message was flung across the page: "President Signs State of War Resolution German Ships in U. S. Ports Are Seized."

"That man!" Faith protested aloud; ". . . after he said he'd keep us out."

"But it was inevitable," Miss Harvey said, pulling the paper toward her. "After the Lusitania, what else could he possibly do?"

The moment's intimacy with Miss Harvey was immediately destroyed. Faith saw her as a stranger, near-sightedly scanning the headlines . . . an opinionated school-teacher who believed what she was ordered to believe because she had a bigot's reverence for authority.

They shan't have Joel, Faith thought fiercely. . . . Oh no, they can't get him. He's too young . . . much too young.

Then, as though to make sure that he had not already escaped her, she hurried toward the streetcar that would take her home. After she had walked a block, she realized that she had not said good-bye to Miss Harvey. But it did not matter. Miss Harvey had the paper. Probably she had not even noticed Faith's disappearance.

As she waited for the car, she counted her belongings again. . . . Money (1), gloves (2), handkerchief (3), brief-case (4), book (5), umbrella (6). . . . That wasn't all. There had been something else. Seven things. She remembered distinctly. Money (1), gloves (2), . . . Oh yes, of course, the flowers. She had left those. . . .

II

(April, 1917)

THE campus was under the spell of a strange delirium. Nina had been tempted to think of it as a "divine unrest." But she had rejected the fancy phrase because she herself was only half-hypnotized by the war feeling. Certainly, the sleepy young men who shut their books and dashed off to training camps had persuaded themselves that they were either gods or, at the very least, angels under the influence of gods. They were unaware, most of them, that they seized happily on the opportunity to leave school because they saw no likelihood of getting through Analytical Geometry or because Chaucer and his Canterbury Pilgrims had become quite insufferably tiresome travelling companions.

As she crossed the campus, on her way to Wentworth Hall, where she was to pick up some of Miss Morgan's mid-semester examination papers, Nina studied the couples on the lawn. They were no longer victims to the amorous lethargy which traditionally took possession of the student body on the first mild day of April. There was a kind of alert sternness to the boys and girls who sat in upright, even respectable, attitudes on the grass. Their talk was fervent and serious.

Probably this was an improvement on the more familiar picture, Nina thought. Mother had come to the campus with her one Sunday afternoon and been disgusted by the behavior of what she called "the mating mob." These were the out-of-town students who had the campus to themselves on the Holy Sabbath and who spent it in the most extraordinarily frank expression of their yearning for affection. Mother had seen the mating mob at its most inflamed.

But all that was changed now. People who had drowsed through classes for weeks had suddenly become alert. They lis-

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tened attentively when their young instructors or middle-aged professors abandoned all pretense of talking about prescribed courses of study and turned each session into a discussion of the war. Nowhere was the enchantment more completely in evidence than in the library. Ever since Nina had become an assistant at the checking desk, Miss Barton had given practically her whole life to the cause of snuffing out conversation in the study hall. She could hear a whisper clear across the room, and she would bear down on an offending pair like a Spanish galleon under full sail. But lately she had become strangely indulgent. Whispers had increased in volume. They had gone unchecked until now they might be described accurately as murmurings. And yet Miss Barton took no punitive action. She sat at her own desk, brooding with the compassionate aloofness of a Buddha. Nina suspected Miss Barton of sentimentalizing, in a frightful abandonment to mental vice, over the young men who would presently go out from her study hall to become heroes. . . . Let them whisper while they might. Soon they would be required to make the great sacrifice: that of crossing the Atlantic to fight the ruthless Hun. From Miss Barton's point of view, Nina believed, the object of the war was undoubtedly that of preserving Miss Barton's virginity. It was a little difficult to share the head librarian's conviction that so ancient and honorable a thing as her own chastity needed to be protected by action quite so aggressive. But, ever since the Lusitania, Miss Barton had babbled volubly about how it just showed that American womanhood was not safe while creatures like that remained in the world.

Bernard Buholtz stepped toward Nina as she was about to enter Wentworth Hall.

"You're going to have lunch with me at the Sheltering Oak," he announced.

His possessive confidence annoyed her. She was about to assure him, with frigid politeness, that she would see him in hell first. Just in time, she remembered that she had spent her lunch money for the next week, in advance, on a copy of Shaw's plays that Joel wanted. If Bernard Buholtz thought he could bully her, she would have an appropriately sly female revenge by exploiting his

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pride. He could damn well buy her lunch, if the gesture of owning her was worth it to him.

Without a word, she wheeled into position beside him, elaborately burlesquing the military maneuvers of the cadets on the drill grounds across the road.

"Yes," Bernard said, with corrosive scorn, as his eye followed Nina's, "your brother is over there, drilling his little heart out. I passed him on the campus, an hour ago. He was feeling so superior, simply because he was in uniform, that he would hardly speak to me. He's evidently forgotten that he's nothing but a cadet."

"Oh, Bernard, you imagined it. Joel hates drill."

"Of course he does. What intelligent person wouldn't! But no doubt the commanding officers tell the cadets that they're soldiers in the making. That adds an element of holy zeal to something otherwise hideously tiresome. It has made Joel feel very noble."

"All right! Joel's an imbecile. We seem to have got that point settled. Of course he gets grades that will land him Phi Beta Kappa in his Junior year. But he's a suggestible moron if the great psychologist, Dr. Bulldog Buholtz says so."

Bernard offered no apology, but the tone of his voice, when he spoke again, was meant to be conciliatory.

"That family of yours is amazing. You could cheerfully kill Joel yourself. But you'll kill me before you'll let me touch him with a feather."

"Joel and I are family enemies. But that doesn't mean that we don't respect each other. I used to hate him because he had the inside track in our rivalry for praise from Mother. But now that we're running neck and neck, I rather like him."

Nina frowned, as she finished speaking. Bernard always challenged her into telling intimate family secrets. She disliked him vaguely for drawing confessions from her. She hated herself for allowing the secrets to be drawn. It was going to be a charming luncheon. She could see that. But there was no way of getting out of it now.

They seated themselves in a booth at the Sheltering Oak. Nina,

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feeling that she must punish herself by privation, insisted that she would eat no food . . . only a "Chocolate Goo." When he was quite sure that she meant to stick to her resolution, Bernard ordered two ham sandwiches for himself. His resources were as slender as her own, Nina realized; but it was characteristic of his lack of finesse to parade the fact that he was hungry enough to eat all the food that he would have bought for two, had Nina not developed a whimsical appetite.

He looked stolid, greedy and sullen—all at once—as he munched his sandwiches. Nina had endured his silence for what seemed like an eternity before she snapped at him:

"Oh, for God's sake, Bernard, you're supposed to be giving me a good time, aren't you? Talk to me: Tell me about Aucassin and Nicolette, if you can't think of anything else."

Bernard smiled. Aucassin and Nicolette were the white rats on which he experimented in the basement of his rooming house . . . "running rats," Bernard called the process. His landlady was not fond of the idea. Nina had helped to win her around by making an intimate joke of the whole business. It had seemed irresistibly comic to christen rats. The big Irishwoman had laughed immoderately at the idea.

"You'll think I'm trying to be funny, Nina. But Aucassin and Nicolette are among the reasons why I don't want to be bullied into going to war."

"No one's bullying you, Bernard."

"That's where you're wrong. Everyone bullies you, subtly, by withholding admiration from you until you do go." He was silent for a moment and then burst out angrily: "Why should I allow myself to be stampeded? I'm not like all these stupid fools who are just grabbing at an excuse to play hookey. I don't want to get away from school. I like teaching my classes. There is always at least one person in each group, with a glimmer of human intelligence, to whom you can address yourself. I like running rats. I like being with my friends and playing the violin. There's nothing I want to escape from. I've already thrown off the domination of my family. I wouldn't gain a thing by going to war. And

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I'd lose a lot: intelligent companionship, a chance to do the work I like, a clean place in which to sleep all by myself."

He thumped the table and glowered at Nina.

"I don't want to be driven back into a barracks. I lived in the same room with a lot of brothers who didn't bathe often enough all through my childhood. It has absolutely no attraction for me."

One of the things, Nina told herself, that made it difficult thoroughly to like Bernard was this obsession with the olfactory unpleasantness of his past. Though he himself obviously had detested it, he was forever making her share it with him: the diapers of the younger children, left for a day at a time in the kitchen because his overworked Mother had no time in which to wash them; all kinds of things like that! She had heard him talk about the uncleanness of his family so many times! Why did he want to make himself and his background grotesque in her eyes? She had heard quite enough about all that from Mother. Bernard was as grim about the slime from which he had sprung as any malicious scandal-bearer could be. If his purpose was to suggest that, out of the mud, he had flowered into an immaculate lily, he failed ridiculously. The times when she liked him tremendously were those when he was not self-conscious at all, but talked as though he had come spontaneously into existence at the instant when his fine mind began to unfold.

"I suppose I'll go to war if I'm forced at the point of a gun," he went on scolding. "I've no desire to make a martyr of myself by becoming a political prisoner. But I'll avoid it as long as I can."

He looked up from his sandwich with a look of sullen defiance in his eyes.

"Well, I'm not going to prod you with a bayonet. You can count on that," Nina laughed.

But it was an effort to pretend to be amused. She was quite completely bored with Bernard's complicated knot of resentments.

"Your mother would be glad to administer just the telling thrust."

Nina threw down her spoon.

"Now you really are talking nonsense. Mother is the one person

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I know who doesn't go on about the war as though it were holy. That's partly because she's afraid it will take Joel. But it is also partly because she has a conscientious objection to it. During the Spanish-American War, she tried to talk against it, at a church meeting, and got howled down by a yelping patriot. It has made her miserable at the very thought of war ever since. Waldo Parker predicted this one at our house years ago. Mother has clung to the idea that civilization would stop it. She can't forsake those attitudes, all in a minute. And she hasn't. I don't know in the least what I think about the war. Probably Mother has a confused point of view, more or less like mine. But at least you can't accuse her of being hysterical."

Bernard only smiled in the infuriating way that was characteristic of him when he imagined that he was presenting a fine home portrait of the unbewildered psychologist.

"Oh everything will play on her natural idealism until she succumbs. Your mother would make an expert recruiting officer. All she would have to do would be to hypnotize the young men with her plausible talk about what superb and unique creatures they are. She would have them in uniform before they knew what had happened."

Nina caught Bernard's eyes and let them receive the scorching heat of her resentment.

"Did you ask me to lunch just to buy the privilege of insulting my entire family? You began on Joel. Now you've turned, in a perfectly unjustifiable way, on Mother."

"I feel justified in attacking your mother. She's attacking me."

"Bernard, darling, it really is time that someone broke the bad news to you. You haven't been at your most attractive lately. If you have felt a difference in Mother's attitude toward you, it is probably because you've gone out of your way to be boorish with her."

"She makes me boorish by being so impossibly graceful. How can anyone hope not to slip on the floor when your mother has deliberately brought it to a high polish so that you will fall . . . ? You don't understand your mother, Nina. She knows that I'm in love with you and she's hoping to break it up."

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"You're not being in the least fair. You and I agreed not to talk about being in love . . . not for at least a year. We can't be married anyway. What's the use of talking about it?"

"I agreed not to talk about it, yes. Because your only alternative was not seeing me at all. And I'm willing to bet that your refusal to consider yourself engaged to me was an idea that your mother put in your head."

Nina found herself studying Bernard's face as though it were that of a complete stranger. The pettiness, the look of cunning, that had broken through his expression of stolid resentment, was something that she had never seen in him before. This clumsy pretense to shrewdness made him look more than ever like a peasant. She saw Bernard, now, marred by all the flaws that made Mother dislike him. It had certainly been Mother's duty as a parent to urge that those flaws be studied carefully before there was any commitment. Bernard's childish feeling that he had been wronged made him quite drearily unattractive. He seemed to feel that it had been Nina's duty to collapse gratefully into his arms.

Nina stood up. She had got into the aisle beside the booth before Bernard realized that she was leaving him. He sat staring up at her with an air of abashed surprise.

"You are quite wrong if you think that Mother has tried to prevent my seeing you, Bernard," she said.

For an instant she paused to consider her words carefully. What she had told him was true. There was no point in hurting his feelings further by admitting that Mother had always hoped there would be no engagement. She drew a deep breath and went on:

"But I'm sure you must see that we're getting on each other's nerves in a pretty unrewarding way. I think we'd better not see each other for a little while."

"Nina . . . !" Bernard was on his feet at last.

"I'm not trying to be melodramatic about it. And I'm not setting any time limit. Let's just call it a vacation. You have a lot of things on your mind that are making you aggressive and quarrelsome. I'll see you sometime when you're in a better temper."

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She turned from him and walked out of the Sheltering Oak, without yielding to the temptation to glance back and see how Bernard was taking her ultimatum.

Evidently he had taken it, lying down, she thought as she walked back toward the campus. She had half expected him to follow her, protesting with the sudden gaiety of which he was capable. But he did not overtake her. Either he was completely bewildered, or else he had taken refuge in his sullenness again.

Let him be angry, then! Let him be good and angry! She was not very well pleased herself. Bernard had forced himself upon her aggressively with the special purpose of being disagreeable. He had always forced himself upon her, until she had come to feel that she was under some sort of moral obligation to be his friend. But they were, as Mother said, fundamentally unsuited to each other. It had been ridiculous ever to think of marrying him. After a little while she would begin to see him again, because he really was a stimulating companion. She enjoyed his excited talk about psychology. His determination to help make it a laboratory science was touching and rather impressive. . . . But he would have to understand that the sentimental tone must be dropped from their relationship.

Nina let herself into Miss Morgan's office. She had expected it to be unoccupied because she knew that Miss Morgan had gone to lunch. She kicked the door open, whistling *Racketty Koo*, the tune that had been repeated over and over again at the Theta Kappa dance which she had chaperoned on Saturday night. But she stopped short as she saw that someone was sitting at Miss Morgan's desk. It was Beverly Howard. He appeared to have made himself very much at home with a book, quite as though he belonged there.

"How did you get in?" she heard herself demand challengingly.

She was immediately ashamed of the raw incivility of her tone. But the recent contest with Bernard made her feel defiant. By way of indirect apology she added the most fantastic insult she could think of.

"You're spying on students' grades, I suppose."

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Beverly laughed. "Not precisely. Irma let me in."

"Oh!"

But still that told her nothing. If he had come to see Miss Morgan, why had she gone away and left him here?

"You're rather more transparent than I usually find you, Miss Nina," Beverly laughed again.

He still called her Miss Nina after all these years. It excited her a little to receive such a tribute in a world from which formality had almost completely disappeared. Beverly, of course, was older. He must be thirty-five. This little air of ceremoniousness set him, appropriately, apart from her other friends. Still, he did not look anything like his age. His large blue eyes had an expression of perennial eagerness. His lithe figure helped to make him look young. Beverly, *le beau*! . . . She was ashamed of having called him that. He couldn't help his perfectionism. And after being with Bernard, the suavity of Beverly's social approach was restful. Bernard wanted conversation to be a raid. He caught at the emotions of other people, private things which he had no right to touch, and tore them apart ruthlessly. He was a vandal, a Visigoth. But with Beverly you could comfortably pretend that there were no such things as emotions.

Nina realized suddenly how much she liked Beverly. She had always liked him. But never so much as at this moment when his flattering deference soothed the feathers of her pride that Bernard had ruffled.

"I don't intend to be mysterious," Beverly was saying. "I came to see you. Irma said she was expecting you and that I might wait. That's all. I hoped that I could persuade you to have lunch with me."

"Too bad! I've had lunch."

Then, at the thought of her ridiculous encounter with Bernard, she laughed aloud.

"No, I haven't had lunch really. I ordered a dessert and then got so angry at someone that I didn't eat it. I'd love to have lunch with you."

"Excellent! I am glad."

As they started down the steps of Wentworth Hall, Beverly's

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arm slipped and he let fall the bundle of examination papers Nina had given him to carry.

"What a fool!" Beverly exclaimed. "In ten years of teaching, I've never done that with papers of my own."

"You should try it. I always grade mine this way. Just give A to those that have landed on the first step, will you? B, to those on the second, and so on." She ran down to the bottom of the stairs. "My, what a lot of failures," she called back. "I'm afraid this isn't a very bright class. Or maybe they're just inattentive because of the War."

The accident made them laugh with nervous excitement. Then, their long intimacy caught up and fixed the mood of light-heartedness. They had discovered in earlier walks that Nina's long legs could keep pace with Beverly's most vigorous stride. As they stepped out together, Nina felt happy and confiding. After the foolish little disaster with Bernard, it was pleasant to be behaving, once more, like a civilized and mature person.

She made Beverly talk about the War.

"Naturally," he told her, "I feel that it should have been avoided. But since it hasn't been, I can't help being glad that my native country and the country of my adoption are in it together. I have no longer a divided allegiance. I hope that does not sound selfish. I feel very sincerely that England's and America's objectives, and their hopes for the future, are so completely identical that they must see this thing through together."

It was good to hear someone expressing a sane and judicial point of view after listening to Bernard's selfish protests. Nina looked directly into Beverly's earnest eyes and felt reassured about the whole disturbing crisis.

But as they sat in their dark corner of the Faculty Club dining room, Nina felt suddenly that Beverly's earnestness had become directed toward herself. She was not really startled when he reached across the table and took her hand. . . . Yes, it was clear that he intended this meeting to have some special significance. Nina's heart beat wildly; but Beverly waited so long to begin what he had to say that she was almost used to its throbbing when he spoke.

EVENING

"You know, don't you, my dear, that I have something particular to say to you? It will be easier for us both, I think, if I say it straight out. I have had an offer to go next year to Columbia. I'm going to take it. And I want you to go with me, as my wife."

How strange! For years and years, even when she was still a little girl, it had been her daydream to be Beverly's wife. She had looked longingly at him through the swinging door when he had been Father's and Mother's guest at supper. . . . Mother will be so pleased. She always liked Beverly. Mother will be relieved that it isn't Bernard, after all. Mother will be so pleased. She always made a good time for us when we were children. And now she has made a good time for me, forever. Because Beverly was her discovery. She made him one of our circle. She has practically given him to me. Darling Mother! She'll be so pleased.

She gave her other hand to Beverly. The Faculty Club dining room was scarcely the place for a first kiss, even if it was nearly empty. But she gave him her hands and her heart . . . and a smile to speak out for her gratitude. . . . And her love, of course. . . .

III

(April, 1918)

“**B**UT, Mother, I’m not good for anything else. You might as well make up your mind to that.”

Faith studied the face of her daughter, Judith, wondering again, as she had wondered so often how it had ever happened that she and David had had a child like this. There was plenty of reason why they should have a child with faults. Judith might have been self-indulgent like her father; she might have had a tendency toward violence, like her mother. Faith would, then, have had a basis for understanding her. But a girl like Judith who was . . . simply nothing! That was impossible to understand. Judith had never cared for intellectual things, like every other member of the family. Now she came with this incredibly fantastic suggestion, offering it as a solution of her life’s problem. Judith had no awareness at all of how grotesque the whole idea was.

“Mr. Tom Lansing who runs the musical stock company is an old friend of Father,” the girl persisted eagerly. “I’m sure he’d give me a job.”

She must keep her temper, Faith reminded herself, and try to make her reasons for forbidding any such plan clear to this unreasonable child.

“That isn’t the point, Judith. Even supposing you were willing to trade on your father’s reputation in such a way. . . .”

The pretty face of her daughter became heavy with sullen resentment.

“I don’t see why my father shouldn’t be allowed to do something for me, even if he is dead. After all, it was Father’s reputation that got Joel his scholarship at the University. You seem to think that’s different, just because it’s Joel. . . .”

“I think it’s different because of the quality of the aspiration involved. Your father would have been proud of the fact that the

people at the University trusted his son to earn a scholarship by getting high grades. Joel has earned it by doing brilliant work. That is very different from trading on your father's reputation in order to become a soubrette in a musical comedy company."

Judith flung herself down on her bed and began to cry. The heavy mass of her beautiful gold hair tumbled into disarray. As the girl's shoulders shook with resentment and self-pity, the last pin fell from place and her hair streamed down about her substantial body. It crossed Faith's mind, when Judith sat up again, her eyes filled with tears, that she looked like a caricature of the Magdalene as she appeared in all cheap painting. . . . She turned away to hide her irritation and her contempt.

"I don't see why everyone's talents are more important than mine," Judith wailed. "You always liked Nina better."

That was not true, Faith thought. There was a time when I could scarcely have said whether I liked Nina or not, her traits worried me so much. Any difference of treatment, as between Nina and Judith, sprang not from conscious favoritism, but from the fact that Nina deserved more . . . much, much more.

"Nina's a book-worm, like you. So, of course, when she gets married you give her everything: a fancy wedding, silver, most of Father's books. You spent almost the last of the money from the house on Nina. But when I want to do something for myself, something that won't cost a cent, you refuse even to let me try."

It was like Judith to express her resentment in terms of money, Faith continued her dismal reflections. None of generous David's generous children—none, except Judith—could ever have been guilty of such vulgarity. It would do no good to point out that Judith's hypochondriacal obsession with doctors and diseases had cost, in a year, almost as much as Nina's wedding. There was, for example, the tragi-comedy of Judith's appendix. It had been removed by a doctor who knew that he was being bullied by an hysterical girl into performing an unnecessary operation. He had disliked Judith intensely for shaking his judgment, by her histrionic protestations. . . . The appendix had proved to be entirely healthy. But that had not convinced Judith of the doctor's superior knowledge. Somehow, she had persuaded herself

that he was, in her own idiom, "perfectly punk" . . . an incompetent doctor who could not be trusted to superintend her convalescence. . . . Judith was wonderful! unteachable. . . .

Judith was becoming, in her usual childish way, aggressive and threatening. She thrust her face close to Faith's and demanded:

"Will you tell me why I'm not allowed to develop my talents?"

"What do you consider your talents to be?"

Put to anyone else, the question might have been cruel. But Judith was not even aware of its amused and despairing unbelief.

"Everyone has always thought I was very funny when I did my imitations," Judith announced confidently. "I get my acting ability from my father."

"Your father was not a mimic, Judith. He had a very real creative gift which happened to be effective on the platform. I think you must see that that is very different from speaking other people's cheap and sordid jokes in a form of entertainment intended for servant girls."

"Just because you happen not to like musical comedy. . . ."

Judith's childish inability to understand had made Faith thoroughly angry now.

"My child," she said severely, "you must listen to me and listen attentively. I don't want you to have a garbled idea about why I refuse to let you play in Mr. Lansing's theater. I am not being merely arbitrary. There is a kind of musical comedy in which I take the greatest delight. You should know what it is. We've always played the songs from the Gilbert and Sullivan opera on the pianola. But the theater where you want to try to start a career has never offered entertainment of that sort. It appeals to the most childish kind of intellect. We've never gone there, not because your father was snobbish. There never was a less snobbish man in the world. It simply never interested us. We sent the maids on their days off because it did interest them. If that is the sort of audience you want, I simply can't understand your preference. You can't go there with my consent. While you're a member of this family you can do nothing conspicuous to degrade its standards."

"I am a member of this family," Judith stormed. "I have a

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right to my father's tradition as much as anyone else in it. He'd have let me do as I liked."

"Judith, do you seriously think that your father would have allowed you to work in a third-rate sort of company like that?"

"Not if you began bullying him about it, of course. He was always afraid of you."

How preposterous, Faith thought. How silly! and yet how wonderfully malign! When David is dead and I can't ask him to tell me the truth, to try to make me believe that he was ever afraid of me! Why should he have been afraid of me? Because I insisted on his being honorable in office? There! she has made good her childish spite. I am defending myself angrily against David. I am accusing him of crimes to save my own self-esteem. And all because this foolish child wants to force me to allow her to make a spectacle of herself in a cheap musical comedy company.

Oh David! shall I avenge us by telling her that you always called her a plebeian? . . . No, I won't spoil her memory of you, even to protect myself. . . . Not because I am noble, but because I respect the memory of your own generosity too much to betray it.

How many ironies one lives through in forty-five years! I spent my young motherhood, worrying myself almost insane over Nina. Yet when she left me six months ago to make a life for herself, she had grown into a witty, understanding woman. She has married a brilliant man and is quite capable of sharing his excellent life with him.

And here is the daughter whom I took for granted as a well-adjusted creature; of whom I expected little, perhaps, but for whom I certainly foresaw a placid and peaceful way of life as the head of her own household! This daughter I have to keep from turning her life into a cheap farce. In the name of her father, she wants to take the little part of his gift that she has inherited and reduce it to buffoonish caricature. . . . No, no, she shan't be allowed to do it.

"Judith," she said still in blank amazement, "wherever did you get such an idea? Who put it into your head to think that you might joint the Lyceum company?"

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Thinking that she saw signs of a possible capitulation, the girl's eyes brightened.

"There's a young man named Frank Snyder, Mother. He's the tenor in the company. He calls himself Franklin Meredith on the stage. He said he'd speak to Mr. Lansing about me. And I said my father used to know Mr. Lansing well. And Mr. Snyder said then it was a cinch, because Mr. Lansing would want to do something for the daughter of one of his old pals. He said it would be a cinch anyway because I have talent."

"Where did you meet Mr. Snyder, Judith?"

"It was at the party that Hortense gave last Sunday. Mr. Snyder met the whole Fleming family at the Peace and Plenty Church. Its services are held in the Lyceum theater on Sunday mornings. Mr. Snyder just happened to be there, one Sunday, and he thought he'd stay to hear the service for a laugh. But he was so impressed that he got up and talked to the whole congregation. He introduced himself to Aunt Kathie and right away she invited him to Hortense's party. I suppose she thought he'd pay some attention to Hortense and Eileen. But he didn't. Only to me. After he heard who I was and especially after he'd heard my imitations, he just talked to me all the time. . . ."

So that was it! The vein of commonness in Kathie was running strong. She belonged to an eccentric religious cult. She scrapped acquaintance with third-rate actors. She tried to catch at glamour and excitement through friendship with such people. Poor Kathie! Life had taught her nothing. But Kathie was not the only victim of cheap desires. The vein of commonness ran through Faith's own family and showed itself in Judith. Judith would duplicate Kathie's dismal tragedy if something were not done to check her shabby impulses.

"Mother, you are going to let me try, aren't you?"

"No, Judith, I'm not. If you want a career on the stage we'll have to think of some other way of getting it for you. Now, please, don't start crying again. Mother knows more about these things than you think. A career begun on the Lyceum stage would end there. Actors in stock companies learn cheap tricks, and, once they have been learned, they cannot be forgotten. You have a

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technique that is useful to you only in the very limited field to which it is appropriate. It takes a Duse to rise to eminence out of a circus tent. The performer of ordinary talent stays in the place for which his training fits him. If you want the stage, there's no use in trying to begin anywhere but at the top. Mother will try to help you."

It was impossible to know how much of what she had said Judith was capable of understanding. But the promise of help was enough to win a respite from tears. Tomorrow, she would look up schools of the theater and find one to which she could afford to send Judith. Surely, the rest of the money from the house would keep her there for a year at least. If only Judith would marry! Then Faith's major obligations would be over. Thank heaven, the boys would never be a drain or a strain upon her.

She went into the living room, wearily neglecting even to turn on a light. Presently, the apartment door opened stealthily and then clicked shut again.

"Joel!" Faith cried out.

"Yes, Mother."

"Darling, you frightened me. I've just had such a difficult time with your sister. I need you to comfort me and tell me that my life hasn't been made up of an endless succession of mistakes."

"Of course, it hasn't. You've been a perfect mother always."

"Then how do you account for Judith?"

"Hereditry, plus environment, plus the interaction of. . . ."

"Oh don't tease me, Joel. . . . You had dinner at the fraternity house?"

Her arms went about him, pulling his head close. Then her fingers became aware of an unfamiliar feel to the cloth of his coat. Her hand brushed over the surface trying to ruffle it into the texture of tweed.

"Joel, what in the world are you wearing? . . . Joel. . . ."

He kept his head close to hers. "I've enlisted, Mother," he whispered.

"Oh son! . . . No! . . . Why couldn't you have waited?"

"Let's not turn on the lights, Mother. No part of the uniform

fits me and I look like a scarecrow. You'd laugh to see me. I'm perfectly grotesque."

"Darling, I don't think I feel much like laughing. Why did you have to enlist? You're only eighteen."

"Plenty of men even younger have gone already. Let me tell you about how I felt, Mother. When I went back to the University this year, there were about eight boys left in the fraternity chapter. And they were all the wrong ones. There's a fat boy with a German name who eats all the time. I never liked him. And there's a big, stupid fool who wants to do nothing but go to the movies. And there's a boy who thinks he's being funny when he carefully unrolls a piece of tinsel paper from a chocolate candy-bar and says: 'Mus' win-na war.' All the ones with any pep or decency or charm are gone. Oh Mother, I just couldn't stand it any longer, being one of the wrong ones."

The childish naivete of this reason for going to war touched her, fleetingly. But her strong protective feeling brushed amusement aside. Why shouldn't he talk like a child? He was nothing but a child, for all his cleverness. He was thin, too. She had not realized before how terribly thin he was.

"Darling, it's the officers' training camp, isn't it? You'll be right here near home for a little while."

He drew away and said nothing for a moment.

"Joel, why don't you answer? What more is there that you haven't told me?"

"It isn't the officers' training camp, Mother. I did try there. They wouldn't take me because I'm a little underweight."

"There you see! Even they know that you shouldn't be in the army."

"But I am in it. Buck Private Joel Fraser, reporting for duty."

"Oh my dearest, it's madness . . . you're so young and you're so thin."

He slipped an arm about her and dropped onto her lap, just as he had always done in the old days. . . .

"I knew you'd say that. And I have an answer ready. You know Mother you told me once that Grandfather Winchester used to say: 'No excellent soul is without a mixture of madness.'"

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It's Aristotle, isn't it? Well, you've just got to think that now. Think that everyone who goes to war is doing something pretty crazy because he believes he can do something to make the world better. You know what you've always said about the excellent life. Don't you honestly think this is the best chance I'll ever have to get in a lick for the excellent life? I've thought about it quite a lot, Mother. I'd like to do something a little helpful toward bringing about the excellent life . . . for your sake . . . and Grandfather Winchester's. . . . Oh gosh, that sounds so pompous. But you know, Mother. . . . You know how we've always felt. . . ."

"Oh Joel, I love you. . . . I love you. . . ."

"I have plenty of reason to know you do, Mother. . . . And you know it—the other way round?"

"Yes, my darling, I know. . . . Couldn't you get out of those clothes and put on something that will seem . . . familiar?"

He got to his feet.

"No, I can't do that, Mother. I'm going to the train right away. You see I enlisted quite a long time ago and I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to have to think about it any longer than you had to. I just came to say good-bye, Mother."

She caught him to her again and began to cry. She was aware only vaguely that after a little while Bruce came whooping into the room and after him, Judith. They all said good-bye to Joel.

But when he was gone and Faith sat once more alone in the dark, she could hardly make herself believe that she had not dreamed the whole thing: his coming, his going again. Surely in the morning, he would be there at breakfast. . . . She wasn't quite sure, even, which camp he was going to. She groped in the dark for the piece of paper on which he had written his address. But she did not turn on the light to look at it.

IV

(July, 1918)

JUDITH put down the telephone and ran into her own room to change her clothes. She could kill Mr. Lansing for giving Frank his notice. That meant the end of the only real fun she had ever had in all her life. Frank had said he would leave after tonight's performance of *Mademoiselle Modiste*. Frank had received his notice two weeks ago. He had not told her before because he hated to make her unhappy. . . . Unhappy! Even Frank did not know how unhappy she would be. She could never stand it without him. Never! . . .

By the time she reached the street, she was crying. Life would settle down, once more, into what it had been before Frank appeared: one endless session of having her mind improved by Mother. When Nina and Joel were still at home, Mother had worked out mostly on them. Things weren't so bad in those days. But now there was no one to assume part of the burden of Mother's idealism and aspiration and heaven-knew-what-all. Mother talked and talked interminably and incomprehensibly about standards and traditions and Grandfather Winchester and the excellent life. It bored Judith stiff. . . . It bored her crazy!

Practically the only rest Judith got was when Mother was mooning over her letters from Nina and Joel. They all wrote perfect books to each other every week. Nina was all hot and literary about living in New York, and Joel was brave and droll about Camp Dodge. Mother insisted on reading the letters aloud to her and to Bruce. Thank heaven, it was always possible to fall asleep. Only Frank had saved her from losing her mind, out of sheer rage at the dullness of her life. And now he was going away.

It startled Judith to hear a loud sob escape from her own lips. With an angry gesture, she pulled a handkerchief from her pocket

and wiped her eyes. As she glanced about to discover whether her agitation had been noticed, she saw Eunice Simpson coming toward her. Eunice walked with the frightened, mincing tread of a librarian. Judith disliked her cousin. She was a feeble caricature of all that Grandmother Winchester had considered ladylike. Probably Eunice had ideals and standards and aspirations enough to satisfy even Mother. Why couldn't Eunice have been Mother's daughter and let Judith be born to almost anyone else in the world!

There was no escaping Eunice now. Judith would simply have to rush past her, hoping to create such a gale that the poor, drab, tiresome little thing would be blown off her feet.

But as they approached one another, Eunice stopped short on the sidewalk.

"Judith Fraser, whatever is the matter with you?" she demanded like a coy little old maid. "I've watched you for a whole block and you've been acting so funny!"

What a stupid little ass Eunice was when she turned coy on you! She had been born to do the dreariest jobs in life: to pass out ragged copies of Robinson Crusoe to dirty-faced little boys in branch libraries; to chaperone Y.W.C.A. picnics; to direct community singing. . . . It might do Eunice good to get an electrifying shock. Judith would have liked to be the one to administer it. If she could only shout:

I'm on my way to see Franklin Meredith. I'm going to visit him in his room at the Jewel Hotel. When he opens the door, he'll reach out and kiss me. He'll call me, honey, and draw me to his lap. He has a figure like the fighters you see in the sports sections of the newspapers. And dimples that would drive any girl mad with envy. I adore him. I adore him!

But she mustn't indulge in any such luxury of frankness. Eunice would only run with the news to Mother. And then Judith would have to listen to an extra-long lecture on: *The Traditions of the Winchesters: Their Cause and Cure*. . . . Only Mother never got around to the cure. With a deeply tragic sense of defeat, Judith had long since given up hoping for a cure of any kind.

"We've just had a rather sad letter from Joel at camp," she said aloud. "I'm taking it down town for Mother to see."

She let her eyes drop with mock solemnity as she had done when she played the Lady Lunatic in *The Wizard of Oz*. If she managed to be melancholy enough, Eunice wouldn't dare to ask what the sad news was. Glancing up covertly through her lashes, she saw that the effect of her statement had been quite gratifyingly disastrous. Eunice looked as though she could not quite make up her mind whether to scream with curiosity or with anxiety. Her mouth hung open stupidly in readiness for either decision.

"I must hurry, dear. We'll tell you about it later."

In the streetcar, she laughed at the memory of Eunice's dismay. A nice little drama had been created. She would have a hard time explaining it away. But she didn't care. Being in hot water with Mother was better than being bored by her.

She wondered with amusement what Mother would say if she knew that, while she had been away visiting Joel at the time of his birthday, her daughter had made her debut with the Lyceum Players. It had been the most exciting week of her entire life. To hear an audience of grown people and children, roaring with laughter every time that one spoke, or raised a hand, or arched an eyebrow! To feel that one had power over them! It was like making a dog sit up and bark, or roll over and say his prayers. An audience did what one told them to do. It was good! it was glorious! Judith knew, now, how Father had felt when he came home from his banquets. She knew why he liked to examine every effect that his words had produced. It was because he wanted to understand his own tricks and make them work better next time. She had studied her effects, during that week in *The Wizard of Oz*, and Frank had said that, by Saturday night, she was giving the performance of a real trouser. She had "wowed 'em." That was Frank's expression.

Mother, in her trusting innocence, would never know because Judith had appeared under a stage name. Judith Armitage, she had been. That was Frank's suggestion. And Mr. Clinton Evans of the Record had written about her in the paper: "A new mem-

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ber of the company, Judith Armitage, plays the Lady Lunatic with an exuberance that is highly infectious." Judith had asked Mother about Clinton Evans. Mother had laughed, in that maddeningly superior way of hers, and said that he had been an office boy in the old days at the Argus. Judith didn't believe it. Mother just wanted to make everything that had to do with the Lyceum theater seem ridiculous.

It had been rather hard to sidetrack Mother about the business of going to a drama school in New York. Judith couldn't have stood it to leave Drummond, after she had come really to know Frank. Beside, Frank said that drama schools were the bunk. The only place to learn to act was on the stage. That sounded reasonable. Father had always said the same thing about newspaper work. It had to be learned in a newspaper office. Schools of journalism, Father had once observed at the dinner table, produced journalists. But who the hell wants a journalist in a newspaper office? When Judith had told the story to Frank, he had said that was it, exactly. "Your old man must have been a card," Frank had said.

Judith ran up the stairs of the Jewel Hotel, her heart beating wildly. She never waited for the elevator. Frank's room was on the second floor. It was much pleasanter to walk than to face the impudent scrutiny of the elevator boy.

Frank opened the door and drew her across the threshold. It was wonderful to be held like that. Judith always felt dizzy in his arms. It was almost painful to be grasped so close, to be bent and twisted as though she had no structure of her own. But she liked the pain. Her whole body invited it. She was sorry when Frank stopped kissing her and led her toward the big chair where they always sat together.

"It was darned nice of you to come, honey."

"Of course I came Frank. As fast as I could. I wouldn't think of letting you go without saying good-bye. It's going to be horrible without you. What in the world happened? I thought Mr. Lansing liked your work."

"Oh, the g.d. fool got sore. I was cockeyed at a party, see? And I suppose I made a couple of passes at one of Tom's pet

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floozy. He says I did. And maybe I did. I wouldn't know. But Tom decides to take it out on me by saying that I've been cockeyed at performances. It's a damn lie. I was never lit at a performance in my life. Not so as you could tell it from out front. Tom just had to give himself an alibi."

It was always a little difficult to understand what Frank meant. But Judith could guess at the meaning of his slang phrases. The meanings that had to do with girls excited her.

"He's foolish to let you go, Frank. He won't get another leading man like you."

"My public!" Frank exclaimed and threw his arms around her.

"But where are you planning to go? Will you write to me sometimes?"

"Say, I'm glad the whole thing happened. I've wanted something to make me get the lead out of my pants and start to Hollywood. That's where the dough is, and little Frankie is going to get some of it. I've got an 'in' at one of the studios. Pal of mine, by name of Sid Greenberg, has gone out as a director."

As he talked Frank abstractedly pulled loose one of the buttons of her blouse. Judith reached up a hand to fasten it again. With an air of playful sternness, Frank caught at her hand and held it fast.

"Listen, honey," he said, "don't you think you've stalled me long enough?"

There was a brazen effrontery to his whole manner when he smiled. Judith adored it. When he looked like that, she felt as though she were being pleasantly smothered under the weight of his bland confidence. She drew a little away from him, but only to receive the full impact of his insinuating irony.

"Sure, I get it," he went on. "You come of one of our best families. O.K. But, look, even if you are a nice girl that won't change the fact that I'm going away tonight. Couldn't we forget about your being such a hell of a nice girl for just a little while?"

She realized suddenly that she should be angry. But, in the same flash of understanding, she knew that she was not angry at all. It seemed strange that, in a situation which the movies always made frightening and shameful, she should feel so curiously

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calm. As though to find the answer to this question, she studied Frank's face.

He continued to be gently and humorously reproachful.

"You're a sweet little hick, Judy. And you got talent. But you don't honestly kid yourself that I've been playing around with you, all these months, just to improve my mind? Now do you? I know you're too good a sport to pull a Little Red Riding Hood act on me."

Judith could scarcely keep from laughing. Frank talked patiently, yet with an edge of tension to his voice. It was exactly the way Mother spoke when she was trying to peddle her ideals and her aspirations. Frank evidently had ideals and aspirations, too, though Mother would have a good deal of difficulty in recognizing them as such.

Oh, let him stop talking and make love to her! It was what she had been hoping for each time that she had come to this shabby room. Hoping and fearing and hoping again. In an instant's illumination, she saw that Frank was shabby, like his room. And she herself was shabby, too. It didn't matter. She was even glad. All her life, she had been expected to maintain standards which were not her standards at all. Mother expected her to be as bright in conversation as Nina; to get as good grades as Joel. If she had been able to satisfy those demands, it would not have been enough. Mother would never be content until she had made all her children somehow holy like Grandfather Winchester. . . . It was a relief to know that, at last, she was kicking all that high-toned nonsense out of her life forever. She was deliberately debasing it; stamping on it. Never again would she let anyone force her to pretend to be better than she was.

She flung herself exultantly against Frank's shoulder. "Oh, I do love you!" she cried out.

Afterward, she lay on the bed, thinking: I can never go home now. I have had the last session with Mother that I shall ever have. I won't have to face the lie about a letter from Joel. The curtain has come down. It's over.

She realized that she had let Frank make love to her because

she wanted to do something that would make it impossible to go back to the life she hated. Love was strange: humiliating, at first; and then, painful; and then . . . superb. She hugged the memory of the ecstasy and the pain. The humiliation was nothing, really. She could laugh at that now.

Frank had fallen asleep beside her. In the dim light that crept into the room through the crack left by the window shade, she could see the outline of his body. The texture of flesh was lovely to look at. With men, the flesh of the face got so toughened by shaving that you did not know what it was really like. . . . It was too bad that people had to conceal the charm of their bodies under clothes. But, of course, few people were beautiful like herself and Frank.

The luxurious warmth of the summer night made her feel cozy here in Frank's ugly room. She had never been so much in love with her own person. In the past, it had caused her pain enough. Its loveliness had been partly spoiled for her by the fear for it that every ache inspired. Now she felt confident. She wished that Frank would wake and put his arms around her again.

I haven't one of the instincts of a nice girl, she told herself. I've been bad and I simply don't care. It's funny the way books and movies lie about things like this. Sin! You're supposed to be shattered by it. When you've been seduced, you're supposed to cry. But I don't feel in the least like crying. There must be other people like me. They're ignored because they aren't nice. Well, I'm glad I'm not nice. I'll bet Mother was nice. But I'll bet Father wasn't. I'm like Father.

If only Frank would wake up. . . . Oh, he must wake up. It's nearly seven. He'll be late for the theater.

She shook his shoulder. He woke instantly and smiled at her.

"Darling, if you're going to get to the theater by seven-thirty, you'll have to start to get ready."

Frank yawned and stretched out his arm toward her. "Serve Tom right if I didn't show up."

"Oh, but you couldn't do that!" It was against the tradition of the theater. The show must go on. It was Frank who had told her how people in the theater felt.

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"I'll just run in the last minute and play without make-up."

He stifled her protests by putting a hand gently over her mouth.

"You're so darned sweet, honey," he murmured. "So darn sweet. . . . I'd be a jackass to put myself out for Tom Lansing when I won't see you again."

Presently she drew away.

"Now you really must go."

"I'll grab a shower and make a run for it. You stay here till I come back after the show."

He reached for some clothes and smiled, with mock ruefulness, as he pulled them on awkwardly.

For a moment, Judith felt sorry for herself. Frank was selfish. It never occurred to him that he had persuaded her to do something that changed her whole life. He would be willing just to pack her off home to Mother, not realizing that it was utterly impossible for her to go. Mother was home by now, pacing the floor and worrying. She would send Bruce to the Simpsons and the Flemings, looking for her. Eunice would have called by now on the telephone. Mother would be all worked up about a letter from Joel that didn't exist. Mother would be half-crazy with anxiety. It was too bad to have lied about a letter. Judith felt a little ashamed. She had done it only to annoy Eunice and she didn't really want to hurt Mother.

Frank stood beside the bed. His magnificent chest swelled out as he reached up to turn on the light. It seemed to catch and reflect the radiance. If an artist were to paint him, there should certainly not be a nimbus behind his head. But there might very well be one behind his chest.

A firm resolution came to her. Frank shouldn't go away without her.

"Frank, take me with you to California."

He leaned forward and kissed her.

"Wouldn't I like to. But, honey, it just can't be done. When the Wolf takes Little Red Riding Hood across the state line people get very fussy and unreasonable. You wouldn't know about that. But you'll have to take my word for it."

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She did not know what he was talking about. But it made no difference. Anyone could take his wife to California, and she could make Frank marry her.

"I heard you talking to Mr. Lansing about pushing up the age limit of the draft, Frank. How old are you?"

He sat meditatively beside her.

"For purposes of the dray-ma," he said, "I'm a romantic twenty-five. I'm afraid my birth certificate would make it thirty-three. I send dough home to my Dad and Mother in Brooklyn. I've been thinking of using that as an 'out.' But your pretty head has given me an even better notion. I just might surprise myself by marrying you."

She knew that she had him. While he sat thoughtfully, she reached into his vest, hanging on the chair near the bed, and found paper and a pencil. She wrote down Mother's address and under it the message:

"Married to Frank Meredith. En route to California.
Letter following."

Judith

She put the paper into his hand.

"After the performance tonight, Frank, you send that telegram to my mother. We'll drive to Hudson and make it true. I'll pack your bag while you're at the theater. And you'll have to hurry now."

"Say, you're a whirlwind once you get started, aren't you, hick?" He leaned over and kissed her. "I'll do it," he whispered.

"Oh, Frank," she sighed, "it's going to be wonderful."

When he had gone, she did not get up immediately. It was going to be wonderful! She had no clothes but the ones she had come in. Frank would have his last pay check from Tom Lansing. They could buy things somewhere along the way. And none of the severely-tailored things that Mother always insisted on getting her! . . . A new outfit! A new outlook! A new chance! . . . Life, at last, was getting started. . . . And about time, too! . . . Cur-tain, Miss Armitage! . . .

V

(October, 1918)

HE was a stranger: a stranger with whom it was necessary to pretend that a background of intimacy existed. Faith faced him across the table, studying the fine, firm features, trying to discover in him the John Haddon without whose stimulating companionship she had once thought it would be impossible for her to live. But, in the strict orderliness of his composure, she could find no souvenir that reminded her of the past. Intellectual curiosity was the passion that had once made their minds meet. In the severity of their youthful relationship, the desire for knowledge had replaced desire of any other kind. It had been sufficient to bind them together so that each had thought their companionship must go on forever. . . . Yet she could find no curiosity in him now.

Of course, Faith thought ironically, he is a man of great learning. He knows everything. He has no need of curiosity any more.

She became aware that John was studying her, if not with great interest, at least with patronizing pointedness.

"Faith," he said, "you are so greatly changed."

It was inevitable that he should think so. His indiscriminating eye showed him only superficial differences: the lines of maturity in her face; the wrinkles about her eyes; the smart clothes; the mask of resolution that she had learned to wear along with a touch of rouge. Well, let him think that she had changed, if that was as deep as he cared to look!

"Naturally!" she exclaimed. "I'm no longer an eager hanger-on of the intellectual world. I'm a business woman."

"I'm sure you were never a hanger-on. Beverly Howard still talks rhapsodically about your salon."

"Beverly is indulgent, because my husband and I were able to

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make him a little happy, when he might otherwise have been miserable, during his first years in Drummond."

"He wrote me about all your interests, Faith. There was a time when you were doing some creative writing for which he had a great deal of respect."

Faith glanced away to hide indignant tears. It was tactless of John to speak, almost in terms of reproach, about the interests that she had lost. Did he live so completely out of the world that he was unaware of the fact that it was necessary for people to earn a living? Had he always led such a protected life that he did not even know how an harassed mind functioned? The intellect could be forced to learn a new and utterly foreign kind of technique. But under such conditions it had no surplus energy to give to decorative avocations.

When she had sat down to dinner with John, she had been aware only of a vacant place in memory where his image had once been. Now she realized that something like active antagonism had rushed in to fill the emptiness. She drew back her shoulders, as she had learned to do when it was necessary to dominate her subordinates, and turned toward him.

"I'm completely preoccupied with my new work," she said. "I wish you could make your law business here last long enough so that I could show you through my department. You've no idea how fascinating business can be, especially when you've had an unexpected success in it."

"I simply can't fit you into that environment, Faith. Advertising, isn't it?"

"No, I changed my job two months ago. A department store—Gordon's—offered me twice my former salary to try to reorganize a mail-order department in which they've been losing money for years. I was able to show a small profit, in the first month, and a really substantial one, in the second."

John Haddon set down his coffee cup.

"You're an incredible woman, Faith! Who would ever have dreamed, back in the Meadville and the Onondaga days, that you would have been capable of this?"

She laughed.

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"The profits are not without honor, John . . . save in Onondaga."

It surprised her to have said those words. It was really David, speaking out of her mouth. This was exactly the sort of whimsical detour from logic that he had always loved and applauded. John, of course, would not know what to make of her flippancy and would be more sure than ever that she had deteriorated.

She did not want to shock him any more, or to fence with him, either.

"Don't you see, John," she said leaning earnestly toward him across the table, "I want what I've always wanted . . . some good way of life. Only, not for myself any more. I must create it for my children. Particularly for my sons. And most particularly for Joel. He gave up everything that he likes, when he enlisted. He accepted in exchange everything that he hates. Joel has tried, from the start, to be humorous about conditions in the army. But he's much too sensitively organized not to mind such an environment, dreadfully. Just the lack of privacy alone would be enough to demoralize him, if he did not have a kind of quiet fortitude."

She detected in her own voice the signs of an on-coming rush of eloquence. During her years in business she had learned to try to control her disease of easy articulateness. Simple, uneducated people resented it. They were at once intimidated and antagonized. In the face of eloquence, they stood dumb and stupid. And afterward they went away to find sly ways of revenge in studied non-cooperation. John, to be sure, was not one of these stupid ones. Still, Faith experienced the sense of guilt that had become habitual with her whenever her tongue began to betray inner reflections.

"You think I'm being sentimental about Joel," she said apologetically.

"Not at all. I don't see how it could be otherwise with a boy who has led a protected life and then is flung into that gross caricature of a man's world. You may find it hard to believe, Faith, but I experience a kind of personal pain at the thought of your son fighting in France."

She was aware of an acute sense of relief.

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"Something else has helped him," she went on eagerly. "It is his love of the theater. He resolves the whole experience into a drama of which he is the detached observer. He encloses it within the limits of a stage, and that makes it, somehow, more familiar to him. His dramatic sense enables him to organize the material and find a meaning in his experience. It's all in his letters. I can show you."

"I'd like to see his letters, Faith. My train doesn't go until midnight. We'll go back to your apartment and spend the evening with them."

He was indulging her obsession with gentle superiority, she supposed. But it did not matter. Joel was a more important person than John. He was the future.

"When he comes home," she said aloud, "nothing will be too good for him. Nothing. . . . That's why I must have money. As much as I can possibly earn. To give him a really good education. Perhaps I'll send him to you, John."

"My dear! If you would trust him to me, I should be very grateful."

Faith's attention quickened. He seemed to mean it. She allowed her guarded distrust of him to fall slack.

"There's Bruce, too. He was his father's favorite child. I know parents are not supposed to have favorites. But in that case it was inevitable. They were so strikingly alike from the minute Bruce was born. A sympathy sprang up between them immediately. I owe it to David to do all I can for Bruce. He's in a very good school . . . one of those experimental places."

John smiled.

"Faith, do you remember how you used to make lists of the things you meant to do with your life?"

She nodded.

"You still make those lists, don't you? Only now it's your children that lead the catalogue of moral obligations. I suppose you've checked your daughters off as finished business."

Faith leaned forward again.

"Tell me about Nina. You barely mentioned your visit with her and Beverly."

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"It was very interesting," John said with his cautious air of weighing judgment. "Nina's a striking creature. Not pretty. I suppose you know that. But with her hair cut off in that curious, shaggy way, she's distinctly noticeable. There's a kind of wayward, gamine look to her. The same quality is characteristic of her conversational style. She abuses everyone with a mixture of bluntness and subtlety. How did she ever develop that chronic irony?"

How did she? Faith's mind echoed the question. It must be a feminine version of David's mental habit. He had always taken the devious turn of wit, away from any abstract consideration that threatened to be troublesome.

"But she's happy, John?"

He did not answer for a moment.

"Yes. As happy as anyone really is, I think. She has a great deal to make her happy. Her trick of irony challenges the interest of everyone. She's enormously popular with the people whom they know at Columbia. She edits all of Beverly's articles. She works for three hours every day on her own novel. What's better than being as busy as that?"

Strange, secretive Nina! She had said nothing about a novel in any of her frequent letters.

Why does she want to deny me the satisfaction of knowing about her work? Faith wondered.

She examined the problem unhappily and did not realize that she had been silent for an uncomfortably long time until she heard John say:

"Tell me about the other daughter . . . about Judith."

For a moment Faith did not answer. The mention of Judith's name always made her feel as though she were being challenged. What could be said to John about Judith's life that would not seem distressingly dreary? In answer to her own long letters, Faith received from California illiterate-looking scrawls. They told of the difficulties Judith's husband had experienced in finding work. But each of them had had small assignments. They managed to live. That seemed to be all that could be said . . . except, of course, that Judith had repudiated everything for which her

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family stood and that her mother had given up the unrewarding effort to understand her.

"Judith married an actor, you know," Faith said aloud. "He has great charm."

Certainly, it must be fair to assume that a popular stock company actor had charm of a sort. It was impossible to admit to John that she had never even seen Judith's husband. All that she knew of the marriage was contained in the telegram that had come on the night of Judith's disappearance. In her almost-crazed anxiety, Faith had called the police. They had done nothing except to verify the fact that the marriage had taken place. In retrospect, it seemed to Faith deeply humiliating that Judith had made it necessary to report the intimacies of her family affairs to indifferent, cynically smiling officials. If John knew the whole story he would probably be critical of a mother who could be so out of touch with her daughter's affairs. But how was it possible to be bread-winner and duenna to a sly, stubborn girl, at the same time?

She sighed.

"I'm afraid I don't understand Judith's way of life very well."

John smiled.

"The family is a queer institution. I have never been able to be really sympathetic with Legh since she became a 'new woman.'"

He took out his cigarette case and, after having helped himself, passed it across the table to Faith with an apologetic smile.

"No, thank you. I haven't learned to smoke. I'm not a new woman, you see . . . even if I have changed so much."

He ignored her challenge.

"Legh has cancer, Faith."

"Oh, John! . . . no!"

"She knows it. I think that has something to do with the way she acts. She was in Washington with those hysterical women who picketted the White House in the suffrage crisis. She got dragged off to spend a night in jail with shop-lifters and prostitutes. I think Legh imagines that this is her one chance to do something significant with her life before she loses it. But I find it very humiliating. I know so many people in Washington. They resent the demonstrations of the suffragists, and I don't blame

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them. I wish Legh didn't have to be involved. But . . ." He shrugged his shoulders.

Faith could think only of Legh, facing the end of her life alone, waiting for torment as a conclusion to monotony. To die like that, suffering the most violent sort of pain, without ever having had the compensations of healthy, normal life! . . . it wasn't fair!

John put out his cigarette.

"Shall we go, Faith? It was wrong of me to tell you about Legh so bluntly. You must try to forget it. There is nothing that anyone can do."

As they stepped into the taxi, Faith said: "We'll go first to Margaret's house. Bruce had dinner there. Beside, Margaret and Kathie are expecting to see you."

Conversation at Margaret's was difficult. John, who had never known Poe Simpson intimately, retreated into silence to hide the bewilderment he felt at being asked to relish the drollery of the firemen across the street. It was strange that Poe Simpson could not understand how foreign to John, in idiom and meaning, were all his favorite stories. . . . Kathie talked fatuously about the marriages of her daughters. She was determined to make Ernie Paulson's clerkship in the bank seem like the beginning of a career that would inevitably end in fabulous wealth. She was even more eager to make Alton Cramer's run-down dairy sound, in her description, like the demesne of a gentleman-farmer. . . . Dorothy and Eunice Simpson talked primly of their work in kindergarten and branch library. . . . Bruce fell asleep on the sofa.

When they rose to go, at last, John said: "Don't wake the boy." With a surprising dexterity, he took Bruce into his arms, managing not to disturb his sleep. The whispered and hurried good-byes at the door were easier than the lingering ones that Margaret and Kathie would have expected under other circumstances.

A few moments later, Faith unlocked the door of her apartment. A slip of paper was attached to the knob. As John carried Bruce across the threshold, she paused in the dim light of the hall to read it. The notice was of an undelivered telegram. Nina? Joel? Judith? her mind questioned, as she ran to the telephone.

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"Just put him down, John." Bruce opened his eyes in bewilderment. "We're at home, darling. You run along to bed."

John stepped close to her as she stood at the telephone.

"It's a telegram," she explained. "I don't know . . ."

She was aware of his arm, steadying her. . . . Then, as she received the message, the world dropped away from beneath her. . . . She was falling through space, endless, depthless space. There was a ringing and whirring somewhere far off. No, very close. . . . She went on dipping, now forward, now backward, down, down, down, through a stormy, gray blankness.

"What is it?" she heard a voice ask.

Then her own answered: "Joel. . . . He's wounded. . . ."

She felt herself lowered into a chair. And then the voice again. . . . It was John's. . . . "I'll put through a long distance call to Washington. I have a friend in the Department of Justice. He'll do everything he can to learn details."

Details, yes. She had to know the details. There was a comforting, familiar sound to the word. She used it every day. There were so many details to her life. . . . She had to see that Bruce had gone to bed properly.

As she pushed through the swinging door, the significance of what had been told her became real. Joel lay somewhere, his thin body broken. She did not know where! She did not know how he had been hurt! Once his life had been part of her own. His body had lain within her, safe and secure. Then, later, his body was in her arms, whole and warm and sweet. It had been hers to protect, to nourish. She had watched him from year to year, changing and yet remaining for her always the same: the best of her very self. The thought of him had filled her with an unspeakable love. . . . Now all that love was changed into something strange that gagged and choked her, that wanted to escape in a scream of despair.

Bruce had thrown himself on his bed and fallen asleep, once more, still wearing his clothes. Faith pulled off his shoes and drew a blanket over him. As her hands touched his shoulders, she felt as though he had mysteriously become Joel. She was

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drawing the blanket over the broken body. The thought released her tears. She sat on the edge of the bed and cried silently.

After a time, she thought of John and went back to the living-room. He was pacing the floor near the telephone.

"I'm waiting for the call to be put through. I'll stay until it comes if it takes all night."

"Oh, John . . . to have forced existence on him for nothing but this!"

His arms were around her.

"My dear, you must try to control your imagination. He's only wounded. It may not be serious at all. They've developed a wonderful technique for treating every kind of casualty in the base hospitals."

That's true! He's alive!—Her mind caught at the words.—He's alive. I shall have him back. I must!

She clung tight to John's arm, as though the hope, that came from him, itself were tangible and must be held greedily.

"You mustn't regret what your life has been," John was saying. "I know that sounds like smug advice. Job's comforter. . . . But you don't know how deeply I mean it. You've had life and love and death and hope and fear and aspiration and despair. You've had everything. And I've had nothing. . . . Nothing at all but caution, walking with heavy step, following an endless and utterly insignificant routine. I suppose there has been a kind of progress in my life. But progress, without struggle. I've had recognition; but without excitement. Here, with you, in this crisis of your life, I'm nearer to reality than I have been for twenty years. Nothing has touched me so deeply. Nothing has made me long so much for some simple, definite thing. . . . Of the two of us, you are the fortunate one, my dear."

His words had soothed her a little. Faith let her head rest against his shoulder. It was strange that she should have happened to share this crisis with John. Strange to have seen him carry Bruce so tenderly from Margaret's house. Strangest of all, that now, for the first time in all their history, she should feel a kind of physical tenderness for him. There had been only a stern intensity in her feeling for him once. And then, afterward, the

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gnawing antagonism that she had experienced earlier this evening. But now she loved him, in the way that she had loved David. In the way that she still loved David. . . . It was right to love John a little. He was thinking of Joel and Bruce as the sons he might have had. It was right to pity and to comfort his despair.

John was speaking to her again.

"I said tonight that you had changed, Faith. But I was wrong. You are the resolute creature you always were. I've kept thinking of a little line from a poem by Arnold that has always called up your image for me. 'A fugitive and gracious light she seeks. . . .' I've changed the pronoun to fit you. Because it is your line. You have always sought that light. I know you always will."

Perhaps . . . perhaps . . . , she thought. But if I lose Joel, how can I ever look for any good thing at all, except my own way down to death?

She thought again of his broken body and trembled.

John's arms went closer about her. They stood together in silence, waiting. . . .

VI

(January, 1921)

JOEL climbed the stairs to Stephanie Blake's attic apartment. He moved briskly, but cautiously, feeling glad that there was no one else in the hall to see his sportive pretense at leaping.

Why do I have to be so self-conscious about my beautiful and costly peg-leg? he wondered. Lots of really energetic cripples learn to play football with artificial legs less modish than mine. But I go lurking around, after all these years, still feeling conspicuously maimed. I'm a damn fool.

Stephanie was playing the phonograph, inside, and did not hear him knock. After a moment, he reached into his pocket for his own key and unlocked the door.

"Hello, darling." Stephanie stopped the record and came forward to kiss him. "I hoped you'd come tonight because I'm low in my mind. And I hoped you wouldn't come because it's such a miserable night. My God, how do you Middle-Westerners adjust yourselves to your vile climate?"

"We don't, my little magnolia-blossom. We just shiver and sweat and, in between crises, speculate as to what crimes of patricide, rape and sadism, committed in past lives, we have been sent to the Middle-West to expiate."

"It's suffocatingly and unhealthily warm in here . . . thank God."

"Warm and nice," Joel murmured, as he stretched out on the sofa. "You know, Stephanie, with a pot of gilt paint and a few yards of black satin to cover the lousy furniture, you've made this place as chic as an expensive Parisian brothel."

"What would you know about the expensive ones, my pet? Getting a little above yourself, aren't you?"

"I was in an expensive one once . . . by mistake. Shall I tell you . . ."

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"No, thanks. Tell me instead why you're so blue."

Stephanie sat down beside him on the sofa.

"Oscar in your way?" Joel asked. "I'll remove the loathsome thing if it is."

"As though Oscar and I weren't old friends?" Stephanie laughed.

"I have a little peg-leg that goes in and out with me. And what can be the use of him is more than I can see," Joel recited, in imitation of a child's breathless monotone. "It's supposed to restore my self-esteem. But I'm afraid Oscar's really not equal to his job."

"Tell me why you're so blue," Stephanie repeated.

"I'm not blue. What makes you think I'm blue?"

"Oh, Joel, I know you so well. I'm not an assistant in psychology for nothing. When your libido is turned outward, you say very sweet and gratifying things to me. You tell me that I'm attractive, even if I am an elderly lady of twenty-eight. But when you're in one of your introverted moods, your conversation is made up exclusively of little ironic twists and torturings."

"You think you can read me like a primer, don't you?"

"No, like a routine case in abnormal psychology, my darling."

Joel turned on his elbow and drew her into his arms.

"I never stop thinking how swell you are, Stephanie. All that lovely insight and capability and compassion somehow packed into the center of a little bon-bon of a woman! . . . To look at you, my dear, you'd think you were just a dear little wish-fulfillment, labelled: Charleston blonde. There's something deliriously enchanting to the feminine ripple and billow of you. But underneath the charm, you're about the shrewdest wench alive."

Stephanie laughed.

"All right. I'll give you A for effort. Now tell me what's wrong. Did *Grapes of Wrath* come back again?"

"Oh, sure. But I've grown to expect that. It's just the homing instinct of all my manuscripts. That didn't get me down."

"Show me the letter, Joel."

"I tore it up."

"What did it say?"

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"Just the usual line of . . . well, I won't use what Henry James and I consider the *mot juste* because you're still too much of a lady to care deeply for physiological figures of speech. But you know damn well what I mean."

"Come on, Joel. Tell me about the letter. It's good for you."

"It said the dialogue shimmered with wit. The characterizations were sturdy. The situations, heart-breaking. But no one wants war plays. Why don't I try my hand at light comedy? . . . I've a better idea. Why don't I try my hand at wringing a few Broadway managers' necks!"

"I'll bet your mother said something about the play that you didn't like."

"She did."

"Tell me."

"What's the use of going into all that?"

"To keep the record complete. Go on."

"Mother asked to read the play, when it came back, because she thought she might be able to make a suggestion as to what was wrong with it. She gave it back to me this morning. She said she thought she did know what was wrong. It lacked 'the appeal.' Those vague phrases of hers always drive me nuts. They make me want to pull my eye-balls out of their sockets and bounce them against the wall. But I kept my shirt on and asked: 'What appeal?' 'Oh,' she said airily, 'the idealistic appeal.' Well, I thought: Jesus Christ! the idealistic appeal is there, if you're willing to grub for it. And why is anyone permitted to be so dainty that he doesn't have to grub? *Grapes of Wrath* is an appeal to common decency, isn't it? It urges that men should never again be turned into lousy animals, doesn't it? But Mother thinks that a piece of writing lacks the idealistic appeal unless it sounds a little like a Unitarian sermon. God in heaven! soldiers don't talk like Unitarian ministers. And French chippies don't act like members of Mother's club, the Scholar Gypsies. If I'm going to write about what I've seen, it has to be with photographic and phonographic accuracy, or it's of no interest to me."

"That's just the point. Your mother doesn't want you to write about French chippies."

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"Then she doesn't want me to write at all. Those are the only things I give a good goddam about trying to turn into fiction. Other things are either too stupid, like the way my cousins the Simpsons and the Flemings live; or too . . . too something . . . like the way I live with you."

"Of course! You'd be a nut to write about anything except what interests you. Make room for me, darling. We'll be cozier if I'm beside you. You feel better for having burst out like that, don't you?"

"I don't feel better, Stephanie. I'm tortured by the antagonism I feel for my mother."

"You ought to be glad you feel it, Joel."

"Oh, yes, I know. Don't feel that you have to leap on your milk-white charger and carry the good news from Ghent to Aix that I've barely escaped a mother fixation. I'm aware of it."

"The bitterness you feel is inevitable. It's like the pain of breaking bonds."

"My cure happened a hell of a long time ago, Stephanie. It was the war that broke the pattern. In France, I learned to like men and to love women. . . . The first time I ever stayed with a girl I was simply overwhelmed by the discovery that it wasn't sordid in the least. All the altruism and compassion and magical sweetness of human experience spring out of it. It makes you feel at home with life; ready to receive it all. That's what a French chippie did for me and naturally I'm not inclined to be in the least haughty in my memory of her. I remember thinking that night: My God, what a shrimp I've been all my life! I came home different. Oh, in quite a lot of ways. Minus a leg, too, of course. But I sometimes think that I got a pretty good bargain. A leg in exchange for a wholesome outlook and a little real happiness."

"You mustn't mind your mother's not understanding what you meant by your play. After all, it would have been astonishing only if she had been able to understand."

"It wasn't so much what Mother said that depressed me. Stephanie, you started all this. Now you've got to hear it out."

"Go ahead. Every minute that I lie here with your head on my

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shoulder is more revealing than an hour spent with Dr. Buholtz in the laboratory. I'm getting educated in clinical method."

Joel reached for Stephanie's hand.

"What happened was rather strange," he went on slowly. "I got to wondering if I were a little nutty about the play, just because I wrote it. I tried to think whether my sister Nina, who's written a couple of novels, would understand it. I tried to imagine Bruce's being old enough to give me a new slant on it. And then I thought of my father. He once tried to write a play. I wondered if he would be interested in mine. And, suddenly, I was crying. At first I didn't know why I was crying. It irritated me. But I couldn't stop. And then I knew that I had become aware, for the first time, of something I needed and that I can never have."

He sat up excitedly.

"Six years ago, he died. And I walked through it like a perfectly ordered automaton: making the right gesture, the right remark. Such a fine example of manliness! Such a support to my stricken mother! I heard people say things like that and I glowed with pride. Such a comfort! . . . Such a fraud! I didn't care that my father was dead. It was nothing to me except relief from a slight burden. I should no longer have to avert my face whenever he was near. That's the kind of swell dude you've taken as a lover, Stephanie."

She passed a hand abstractedly over his face.

"Stricken from the record as irrelevant, Joel. You've long since cured yourself of being priggish."

"But think of the indignity to my father, Stephanie. For years I've traded on his reputation. When people say to me: 'Oh! so you're Dave Fraser's son,' I smile as though I deserve the special kind of affection that they offer because I am my father's son. You know, people seem to me to become a little brighter, a little subtler, just by virtue of mentioning my father's name. They quote his jokes and appreciate them. Stephanie, in this town there are hundreds and hundreds of men and women who have souvenirs of my father that they love and cherish. . . . And I have none."

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She drew his head closer.

"They belong to you now, Joel . . . any scrap of a souvenir that you can find belongs to you. The search for your father has begun."

"Do other people lose their fathers and find them only when it's too late?"

"Why, darling, lots and lots of people. . . . Most of them, probably."

Joel lay back on the sofa feeling exhausted.

"I can still taste that damn-fool adolescent tears I cried this afternoon. Because I cried them so belatedly, I suppose I'll have them on my face always. . . . I didn't go to classes at all today, Stephanie. I had to try to remember everything about why my life has been, as it has been. I know now why it was that I lost my father. It was because my mother once told me, after a quarrel, that my father had always made her cry. Even on the night they were married, she had cried all the way to Chicago. That could only seem monstrous to a child, couldn't it, Stephanie?"

"Poor Joel! Nice women have always told their daughters about crying all the way to Chicago. Apparently, it's even more disastrous to tell a son."

"It's Father I pity. . . . Think of being damned forever by a chance bit of reminiscence indulged in by an hysterical woman. Mother did know enough to be ashamed of what she had said. I could never make her talk about it again, after that one betrayal. But the harm was done. The ripples of a psychological mistake go widening out forever, don't they? Because my mother was once unfair to my father, I now have the greatest difficulty in being fair to her."

"You still have to protect yourself, Joel, against falling back under her domination. You have a right and a duty to do that."

"Oh, I perform my duty with fine manliness. I contradict everything that Mother says, out of sheer irritable determination to be on the opposite side. If my mother were to say: 'The moon is not made of green cheese,' I should probably answer: 'That is an ignorant and prejudiced statement. It entirely lacks scientific

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validity because it is based on insufficient direct evidence.' Oh, I'm a terror in the home, all right. You needn't be afraid that I'm not preserving my precious little integrity."

"Why need you stay at home?"

"Because Mother wants so pitifully to do something for me. She'd like to support me in complete idleness for a year after I've been graduated. I'm to do nothing but sit on my fanny and write. Or else, she'd like me to go to Professor Baker's famous playwright's class at Harvard. . . . She wants to make up to me for the War. And somehow I can't bring myself to tell her that the War gave me the best year of my life. That would reflect discreditably on everything that she has stood for and everything that she has tried to do for her children."

"Parents try too hard. Why aren't they content to lead their own lives and to allow their children the same privilege?"

"Stephanie, you're prejudiced against Mother a little."

"Only a very little, Joel. I admire her."

"But what you don't know is that I love her terribly, in the midst of my distrust. I still want to please her, at the very moment when I am doing things that displease her pitifully. My plays and my attitudes and my morals are all direct slaps at her idealism. What I have become makes the whole effort of my mother's life seem futile, because I'm so different from what she intended me to be. But I can't give up my plays or my ideas. So Mother and I are bound to cling together in an interesting agony. That's why I have to escape as often as I can to my delirious and highly illegal love of you."

"You might, of course, make it legal."

"Not a chance, my sweet. You know that."

"Well, isn't he just the dearest little sacrificial lamb! He can't marry because he lacks the conventional number of legs. . . . What in hell do you suppose I care about that?"

"I'm not going to let you fall under the 'fascination frantic of a ruin that's romantic.' I have morbidly read a great deal about what can happen to this unattractively decaying frame. At any moment, I may collapse into a complete burden."

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A sudden irritation swept over him. He sat up and shook her shoulders roughly.

"I don't expect ever to talk to you about this again. If you want to be nice to me right now, O.K. If you don't we'll call it off. But I won't marry you."

"Oh, Joel, I get so damned tired of your talking about my being nice to you. What about my being nice to myself! If you ever put me into any of your plays in the rôle of the high-minded courtesan, I'll kick you."

Joel drew her once more into his arms.

"Let's not quarrel, Stephanie."

She pulled away.

"Yes, I want to quarrel! At least for a minute longer. When you refuse to marry me, you put me in a damned difficult position. Because I'm older, a marriage between us might not work. Presently, you'd blame me for cradle-snatching. I'd become a designing woman."

He tried to put a hand over her mouth, but she drew away.

"I can't ever talk about it again, Joel. This is the very last time. But I wish you'd marry me. Damn it, why do you have to be so proud and angry about the fact that I love you partly because I want to protect you? It's only one element in many. Why can't you be realistic about it and let me have the right to see that you are always well cared for?"

"Because I can't," he said grimly.

"All right."

"All right."

"If you refuse to marry me, I'll marry Bernard Buholtz. Did you know that he was once in love with your sister, Nina?"

"Uh-huh."

"I don't see how she could have passed up a gorgeous creature like that."

"Bernard has improved a lot. . . . He wasn't always so . . . gorgeous."

"But he must always have had a fine mind. The Rosenfield Foundation is going to give him a laboratory and a staff and a salary of \$25,000 a year to do nothing but research."

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"And once he was up before the Juvenile Court for delinquency."

"Oh! that was what your sister had against him."

"I don't think so. . . . I don't know. . . ."

"He's begun to notice me, Joel. He calls me Steve."

"He would! That's probably why my sister wouldn't marry him. The kind of insensibility that could take a lovely name like Stephanie and turn it into Steve would make any fastidious person squirm."

"All right. I'm unfastidious enough not to mind in the least. . . . I couldn't marry him really, though. He's a frightful chaser. . . . But no one will ever capture him. I've a romantic idea that he's still in love with your sister."

"What makes you think so?"

"The fact that he says such spiteful things about her books. He isn't spiteful with anyone else in the world. He feels too superior."

"Nina's books aren't bad. . . . Of course, they're melancholy and tortured. And they're about people who don't live in the world. Only in the mind. But they have a kind of intellectual chic."

"You must lend me one. I'd like to know what sort of mind you must have to reduce Bernard Buholtz to helpless slavery. Your sister vamped him and he has stayed vamped."

"Do we have to keep on talking about him all evening?"

"Joel darling, I listened patiently while you told me what you've been thinking. Why shouldn't I tell you what I've been thinking?"

"You have told me now. I suppose what you're trying to tell me subtly is that you'd much rather I'd go home."

"Perhaps."

"O.K. Afraid you'll have to get up while I straighten out Oscar." She threw herself suddenly into his arms.

"Darling, of course I don't want you to go. I just had a perverse impulse to try to break down your pride. But if you cling to it so stubbornly, it must be part of what I love. . . . Don't go."

His arms tightened about her possessively.

VII

(December, 1924)

FAITH pushed open the door of the apartment and dropped the heavy box containing Bruce's new suit on the hall table. She was tired. It frightened her a little to think how tired she had lately been at the end of each day. Well, why not? She was an old woman. At fifty-three, David had been so exhausted in heart, in muscles, in cells, that he had simply surrendered and died. That was her age now.

Fifty-three! It seemed a perfectly fabulous age. Other people might become fifty-three. But surely she had not done anything so improbable. When she had thought of the end of her own life, Faith had always imagined it as some kind of serene and dignified transition. She would "cease upon a midnight with no pain," her features still firm, her hands ready to grasp the next duty.

But now she appeared to be doing what everyone else did. She was trotting doggedly down to death in the midst of unfinished responsibilities. Simply giving up out of weariness.

Then, passionately, she rejected the idea. She had no intention of dying for a long, long time to come. There was still too much to do. Bruce was only fifteen. She was the mother of a young child. She must see him through his education before she had any right to die.

What tired her was just that the mail-order department had become a sort of Frankenstein monster. She had been almost too successful with it. Now the multiplicity of details to be handled daily exhausted her, to be sure. But it was a perfectly healthy fatigue. She drew back her shoulders and called:

"Bruce, I've brought your new suit for dancing school."

It was Joel who appeared in answer to the call. His appearance caused her a sharp twinge of pity. He looked old. The constant

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strain of his physical handicap had aged him far beyond his years. And he was not happy. Yet there was no way of getting into his secret mind. He had shut her out. Yes, he had shut out everyone except Bruce . . . preferring loneliness to the love that she longed to give him.

"Hello, Mother." He kissed her in the way that he habitually kissed her nowadays: with a fleeting attention that seemed almost like unwillingness. "I'll take the suit to Bruce. Did you speak to the tailor about the shoulders?"

She nodded and went to the table to get the box.

"Joel, did you remind Bruce to have a bath?"

"He's taking it now."

"I must go and inspect the results. Bruce is so impetuous. He's likely to slide over rather important areas . . . just because he can't see them."

Joel smiled diffidently.

"Will you trust me to give him the once over with the bath sponge? Bruce has reached the age when a boy becomes rather grim about his privacy. I'm afraid you're likely to find yourself barred from the barracks, Mother. You mustn't mind."

He took the box and went.

Faith sat down in her chair by the window and lit a cigarette. Learning to smoke had been her only achievement of recent years to which Joel gave his enthusiastic approval. Faith did not like the taste of tobacco, or the smarting of the smoke on her tongue. But she enjoyed watching the blue spiral ascending from the tip. . . . She would never learn to smoke properly. There was some trick of drawing in one's breath when the match was applied. She was always awkward about it. Bruce had said that she needed an acetylene torch to light her cigarette. But she could hold the foolish thing between her fingers and draw on it just often enough to keep it going. Sometimes when she and Joel sat together in the dark, smoking, he would surrender the attitude of aloof austerity in which he muffled up his life. He would talk, haltingly, about his plays. For a moment she felt close to him again.

Both he and Bruce were escaping from her, more and more

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completely. As far as the younger boy was concerned, it was partly Joel's fault. He had assumed the rôle of father to Bruce. Since Faith was indisputably Joel's mother, her part, in relation to Bruce, seemed to have degenerated into that of meddling grandmother.

Actually, Joel was the meddler. He pretended to believe that Bruce was in danger of becoming spoiled because he attended a school where, except for him, there were only rich men's sons. Yet Joel spoiled Bruce more thoroughly than she could possibly spoil him. Only a week ago they had had what amounted to a quarrel over the boy. She had insisted, quite rightly, that Bruce must take his rubbers on a winter week-end in the country. Joel had come home that night with a pair of heavy boots for Bruce, saying that they offered better protection than any rubbers. But they were ridiculously expensive boots. Joel must have spent half a week's salary on them. When she had pointed out the absurdity of his extravagance, Joel had become angry—actually profane—and said: What difference did it make; he had nothing else and no one else to take his money.

Every time that she tried to concern herself in the discipline of Bruce, Joel seemed deliberately to interfere. It had distressed her that a boy of fifteen should have such conspicuous attentions from girls. Almost every week-end there were parties. Some girl's car would be sent for Bruce. On Valentine's Day, Bruce had received an enormous box of candy. Inside the package was an elaborate work-of-art made of paper lace and hearts and sentimental card-board figures. Below the verse was written the cryptic message: "(Code) Honestly. . . . Betty." When she had asked Bruce what "honestly" stood for in his and Betty's code, Joel had taken the valentine almost brusquely from her hand and said: "Perhaps Bruce thinks it's none of our business."

As though anything having to do with Bruce could possibly not be her business!

She put out the cigarette and started to her own room. The bathroom door stood half open. Despite the campaign to exclude her, they were not noticeably fastidious. As she stood before her

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dressing table, she could hear their voices. They were laughing together.

"Well, you needn't high-hat me," Bruce was saying, "... a man of your ilk."

"And you needn't patronize me," Joel retorted; "after all, aren't we Brother Ilks?"

It made her feel desperately lonely to hear their laughter and be excluded from it. Joel denied himself to her. And now he was absorbing more and more of Bruce's affection. It would not be so bad if she were able to feel that Joel was a good influence. But his own life was strange and secret. Two years ago, when he had been sick in bed, she had gone, one night, to straighten his pillows and found a letter beneath them. She had read it, convinced that, as a mother who loved her son desperately, she had a right to know what his life was like.

The letter had confirmed the worst of her fears. It was signed Stephanie. Two things were made perfectly clear: one, that the girl was a fool who could not spell *believe* or *judgment*; the other, that she had been Joel's mistress over a long period. In this Stephanie's idiotic and infuriating "judgement," she "beleived" that she was doing the right thing to leave him. Joel had always said that she would marry someday. "Bernard" knew all about everything and did not mind. She hoped Joel would find his own way of being happy.

Faith hadn't the slightest desire to know who Bernard might be. But a man who could hear such a story from the lips of the woman he was going to marry must be a very low type of human being. And the girl must be infinitely worse. Yet these were the people with whom Joel chose to spend his time. His code was evidently like theirs: brazen, callous, insensitive. All the values she had tried so hard to inculcate into him, he deliberately flouted.

Faith felt her brows contract into a frown as she tried to piece together what she knew of his life. She had to grope for small reminders because he told her nothing. But it must have been just after he was up from his illness that he began to drink. Several times, she had been quite certain that he had fallen into his bed utterly incapacitated with liquor. The first time she had

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cried all night. To think of that sort of thing beginning again! The worst of David, showing itself in Joel! Joel, whom Buford had once called radiant! Joel, in whom she had been sure that all the exacting standards of his grandfather would be fulfilled!

She tried once more to think of his provocation. Of course, his existence was intolerably hard. But she had thought, when he first came home from France, that all his suffering would simply act as a challenge to his spirit. She had counted on it confidently. Instead, he seemed to lack ordinary ambition. He was content to go on, year after year, working on the copy desk of the newspaper where his father had been editor. At first, she had insisted that they would surely give him an opportunity to do something better, just out of deference to David's memory. But Joel had answered that he liked the routine work. It left his imagination free for his plays. All of his ambition centered in them. And, of course, they were hopeless.

He had written one after another, seeming to be inspired by a dogged determination to make each one more depressing than the one before. When she pointed out that they lacked the appeal of things like *To the Ladies* and *The First Year*, he only froze up in antagonism. He wrote about newspaper men who worked at night; about shabby politicians; about waitresses in what he called one-arm joints. The plays were full of prostitutes and bad language and a general sense of desperation. How he had ever persuaded himself that such plays could be put on the stage, it was quite impossible for her to understand. He was slipping deeper and deeper into a preoccupation with unpleasantness, forgetting that there were such things as idealism and a love of truth. His temperament was more inexplicable than his father's had ever been. On the *Argus*, and again when he had been mayor, David had tried hard—with results however inadequate—to do something for pathetic people. But Joel seemed not to believe that anything could be done. He simply observed and commented, in his plays, with the bleak despair, and the undercurrent of cynicism, that seemed to characterize his whole outlook and code.

For Faith, to have to read about all that sort of thing was bad enough! But to have to suspect that Joel's plays reflected the de-

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tails of his own life: that was intolerably tragic. What business had Joel to know about the intimate thoughts of waitresses who were also prostitutes? . . . If David could know what I've let his son become, how he would blame me.

Tears smarted in her eyes. What could she do? What in the world was expected of a mother? Joel retreated behind an impassable barrier. He shut himself up in silence. The few times that he had talked to her frankly about his work, it had been only to explain, half apologetically, that he knew of no way to write except realistically about the people whom he encountered.

But that explained nothing, really. Why should he encounter only such people? He chose these associates voluntarily and refused to know anyone else. He declined the invitations of old friends, like Erik Veblen and his wife. In desperation, Faith had even suggested that he go to live with Nina for a year. In New York, he would be close to the play-market. He would perhaps learn something about the kind of plays people wanted. But he had refused stubbornly, saying that he could not count on finding work in New York where competition was "so tough." She had had to make it clear to him, at last, that she wished to support him. Joel had become obviously distressed and said that he could not possibly accept money from her. At twenty-five, he should certainly be able to take care of himself. . . . As though his age had anything to do with it! As though he did not need care more, now, than he had needed it when he was six months old! As though life could give her any satisfaction beside that of doing something for her own poor, tortured boy!

I could sit here and cry, she thought, from now to the end of my life. But there's dinner to get and my dress to iron for tomorrow and a letter to write to Nina and a decision to make about whether to keep Willie Parsons or let him go for insubordination. Lots to do! Busy! Busy! Busy! It's my only salvation to be busy.

In the hall, she met Joel and Bruce. The younger boy was wearing his overcoat.

"Why are you dressed to go?" she asked, as she kissed him. "You haven't had your dinner."

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"Oh! didn't I tell you?" Bruce's voice broke ridiculously. He frowned with annoyance and went on in the adolescent's strange parody of baritone resonance. "There's a dinner before the dance tonight. Betty's car has come for me."

Faith was about to protest that young people made a ridiculously elaborate ritual of dancing school nowadays. Joel had attended an afternoon class and been in bed, as usual, at eight o'clock. But the presence of Joel intimidated her.

"At least let me see you in your new suit."

"But the chauffeur is at the door now, Mother."

"Let the lower classes wait," Joel said brusquely, jerking at Bruce's coat.

But there was little satisfaction in seeing him in his first long trousers. Bruce took her compliments with resolute indifference and hurried away. She remembered the excitement of the household when Joel had put on his first pair. Life had been fun in those days. But children were different, now. . . . Worse still, they were complete strangers.

Dinner wasn't good. In her preoccupation with so many other things, she had forgotten to season the bean soup. It was flat; too thick; unappetizing as a woolen blanket, Joel insisted grimly that it was excellent and took two bowls. He was trying to make up for all the ways in which he refused to give her his sympathy.

When they rose from the table, Faith said: "Let's leave the dishes. Tomorrow will be Mrs. Larson's cleaning day. She can do them. I want a cigarette."

Joel stood irresolutely by the table.

"I have a date for tonight, Mother. I suppose I could break it, if you want to talk about something in particular."

"Oh, no . . . there's nothing . . . in particular."

"I wish you wouldn't be a martyr about it, Mother. I can stay home. . . ."

A martyr! With his usual perversity, he was trying to force his own rôle on her. If she had betrayed disappointment, it need not surprise him very much. She had nothing before her but the prospect of an evening with her own bitter thoughts. Joel was going to those people whom she did not know and whom she

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feared. He would gather more material for a sardonic play; write at it feverishly and in an almost insane concentration night after night; be hysterically gay for twenty-four hours when it was finished; buy her and Bruce extravagant presents; and finally, after it came back, permit himself to sink into morose silence. What a life for him! she thought. And what a life for me!

But she had learned, long since, that it did no good to rebuke him. She rose from her chair and went to him.

"Run along, darling. Have a good time."

She did the dishes, after all. It was better to be occupied. But the activity of her hands did not stop the painful activity of her mind.

Bruce was a stranger. And Joel! And Nina! And Judith! None of them had the excellent life that she had planned for them. Joel and Nina were unhappy. Judith had communicated with her mother twice within the past year. The first time had been to tell of her divorce from that man with whom she had run away from Drummond. The second time had been to tell, almost immediately afterward, of her second marriage to Howard Furst. Judith's letter boasted that Howard was the best camera-man in Hollywood. To Faith it sounded like boasting of having married the best streetcar conductor in Drummond. Judith's way of life was the most completely incomprehensible of all.

But Faith's closeness to Nina and Joel was more acutely painful. Joel, in his physical nearness, and Nina, in the subtle indirection of her thrusts, were able to hurt her far more than Judith ever could manage to do. Nina's last novel had been a thinly veiled account of her own childhood. *Cloudy Morning*, the book was called. In it the child, Janet, was represented as feeling oppressed by the climate of her spiritual setting, just as she was oppressed by the climate of the physical world. Janet's mother did not appear in the book. She was simply a vague and awful presence shadowing the child's life, like an incomprehensible threat.

I was that awful presence to Nina, Faith thought. But why? I wish I knew.

With the dishes still only half done, Faith drew her hands from the water and began to wash them at the faucet.

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I feel the antagonism of Nina's book, she reflected. And I feel antagonism whenever I talk to Joel. They blame me for something. And they won't tell me what it is. What did I do, except to try to surround them by the best that life has to offer? What did I do, except to long for their good; except to try to give them the excellent life?

Oh, what did I do that was so terribly, terribly wrong?

VIII

(December, 1928)

BETTY SANDS drew provocatively away from Bruce's arms and said: "Hey, don't you like kissing me any more?"

"Naturally, I do," he answered. "I'm no fool."

"Well, then, darling, give way a little to the nice old biological urge. Don't act as though you resented it."

O.K., thought Bruce, why be pious about it? No one expected piety at a party like this. All the boys had been frisked by the chaperones, for hip flasks, when they came in. But the old ladies just looked on, in amused surprise, when everyone proceeded to get comfortably tight. They probably would have thought it very clever of the boys if they knew that a specially appointed committee had secreted flasks in strategic positions all round the ballroom of the Lincoln Club, three hours before the party began. The chaperones didn't really expect anyone to live up to the rules against drinking and necking at these sub-deb dances.

Betty dropped her head against his shoulder and chanted the words of the Cole Porter song the orchestra was playing: *Let's Fall in Love*.

As easy as that! Bruce thought. Close the door, my darling, and let's have an orderly little try at falling in love. Of course, nothing-really-wrong-dearie ever happened behind the closed door! Or at least seldom. When a girl did, occasionally, find that she was going to have a baby, all her friends were surprised and terribly sorry for the poor, benighted creature who had let the biological urge get out of control. The whole thing was cockeyed. Bruce liked it and disliked it, all at once. He remembered what Joel had said about the problems presented at parties like this.

"You kids are in a tough spot," he had commented. "You don't know whether you're men of the world or babes in the woods,

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In my time, we knew. We were very naïve until the War ended the period with a very definite mark of punctuation and began the next sentence with an unmistakable capital letter: I should think you'd want to avoid being jostled around by half-hearted experiences for fear that you'll be bored old men before you've had any real fun at all."

Bruce remembered answering that Joel was probably right. But he ended the conversation by throwing back at his brother the Bernard Shaw crack that Joel was fond of quoting: "What can you and I do, against so many?"

"Bruce, what in heck are you thinking? You sit there looking like the great stone face."

Betty tried to pretend that she was sore. But he knew better. She was simply trying to provoke him into saying something that she could record in that famous diary of hers. The fact that she kept a personal account of everything that was said and done in their crowd was all terribly secret. Only two thousand of her more intimate friends had ever had a glimpse of it.

All right! he'd give her something for the diary.

"I've been thinking that you and I are a couple of brats."

"Why? Just because we've learned to have a good time?"

"I'll tell you how I know that I'm a brat. Look at those trousers. All winter I've been wearing my brother's tuxedo. He's broader in the shoulders, but I'm broader in the beam, and things sort of even up. But he's taller. So I have to have the trousers turned up, each time I wear them. Yesterday, I went to a different tailor because it was easier and I forgot to tell him what I wanted done. He cut them off to fit me. Now Joel can never wear them again."

Betty laughed huskily.

"Is that all you're brooding about? For goshsake! don't let it ruin the party. You should have had your own tux all the while."

"I'm afraid you don't realize what grim sacrifices the poor have to make. Some time when you're sending the car for me, you come along and I'll show you how the other half lives."

"Oh, your brother won't care."

"That's just it. He'll just laugh, because he doesn't give a damn

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about anything. It'll be an excuse for him never to go to any more parties. And he ought to go. It would do him good."

He felt Betty's hand, smoothing the shoulder of his coat.

"Seems funny for you to be in your brother's clothes. You're so different."

"That's where you're wrong. We're practically the same person. He can always finish my sentences and I can finish his. We get along swell."

"I meant you're so different in appearance. You're John Gilbert, mister. And your brother . . . well, he's a very different type."

"Joel is lots better looking, if you examine closely."

"I suppose he admits it coyly."

"No, he thinks he looks like an El Greco saint. He says the striking resemblance makes him doubt all saintliness. Joel suspects that with all the old saints it was really just something they ate . . . or didn't eat."

Betty drew closer.

"You know something, Bruce? Don't get mad now. But I don't think you ought to spend so much time with your brother. I always notice that you talk about him when you're sunk. Or, if you start talking about him, you get sunk."

"You think that just because Joel is a lot older. But you wouldn't think of running away from your father just because he's older."

"That's different, Bruce. I don't know why. But it is."

"You know, Betty, Joel said a strange thing to me once. He said he felt as though I were giving him back something he'd missed, because I'm like our father."

"My father and mother knew your father. He must have been a swell person."

"They knew my mother, too."

"Maybe. But I've heard them speak only of your father. I'll bet you are like him."

Bruce stood up.

"That's what scares me, Betty. I'm frightened green at the thought that I may be like him in everything. He loved people. He got along with them. And they liked to have him around

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because he made cracks and kept them laughing. But they defeated him, at the very same time. I didn't think up all this stuff by myself. Joel gave me most of it. They kicked my father out of office because he had been too honest. And they let my family live in absolute poverty. They didn't give a damn. The other day in chapel, I was running through the Bible because what Mr. Merton was saying bored me. And I came on some terrible lines: 'For they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth. . . .' That's what my father's life was like."

He saw that his seriousness had made Betty uncomfortable.

"I don't see what all that has to do with you," she said petulantly.

"It has everything to do with me. I could easily perform the whole family act, right over again. . . . The Flying Frasers: Fifty Years of Fun and Folly. . . . When my father died, my mother decided that she must give me every advantage that he would have wanted me to have. So, she sent me to an expensive private school where I could be trained to be a little brother to the rich. I've learned to think quite casually about how necessary it is to go to South Carolina for the shooting. Yes, and I've learned to brood about having a modest little boat that will sleep forty people. I have a perfectly swell equipment for leading the kind of life I'm going to lead. It's a darb."

"Oh, it's dumb to talk like that, Bruce. Has anyone in our gang ever made you feel uncomfortable because you happen to have less money? You've contributed as much as anyone just by being . . . fun."

He shook her shoulders with affectionate irritation.

"Don't you get it through that thick skull of yours, stupo? That's just the point. I can keep my place with you by being a clown. As long as I can think up gags, or remember my father's, or Joel's, I'll get by. You'll like having me around. But supposing I don't want to stick . . . on those terms. Suppose, for a minute, that I have a kind of pride that says: To hell with all that stuff; why should I slice myself up into dainty servings of bologna? Maybe I'd rather be whole."

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It amused Bruce to hear with what assurance he improvised on a theme that he had chosen almost at random. And yet that wasn't quite true. These things had been bothering him for a long time. In the bottom layer of his mind, a kind of resentment had been guiltily hidden away. He didn't like always being ready to be driven off in someone else's car. He didn't like having to learn what amounted to a foreign language: the melodious and pleasant dialect of people who assumed in all their talk that the disagreeable and tiresome things of life would always be taken care of by servants; that grace and ease and security were their own exclusive and inalienable rights. At first, he had thought that his resentment was based on the fact that he did not have a car of his own; that he lacked perfect ease and security. But, as he talked to Betty, it became increasingly clear that it was the essential falsity of his position that he hated. Betty and all of the boys and girls whom he called his friends belonged to the picture of the country-club existence. He himself was a figure cut out of paste board and stuck awkwardly into the midst of the snapshot. It was pretty idiotic and inappropriate and unsatisfactory.

"Honestly," he went on aloud, "I'm pretty damn tired of being the sort of person who hangs forever in mid-air without any solid ground under his feet. It's a trick my family learned so long ago that no one ever took the trouble to explain to me how it's done . . . or why. It's become natural to us to live in a thin, rarefied atmosphere. The Frasers and the Winchesters have always been moderately cultivated people with intellectual interests. They have been acceptable to the better element just as long as they have enough money to avoid being conspicuously out-at-elbow or down-at-heel. When we've been really poor, we've been told sternly to go into hiding until we could overcome the vulgar tendency to starve. My mother was reading me something the other day that describes the whole goofy attitude. The genteel tradition, it's called. We've always clung to it by our eye lashes . . . frightfully grateful, when they held, and full of repentance for our sins, when they did not hold. My God, Betty, don't you see how ridiculous it is?"

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She said nothing. Bruce caught at her chin and forced her to look at him.

"Don't you understand what I'm talking about?"

"Not a damn word." She kissed him impudently and settled once more comfortably into his arms. "But if it does you any good to shoot your mouth off, don't mind me. I'm perfectly comfortable."

"I'm not," Bruce said.

"Is my elbow sticking into you . . . or am I too much of a skeleton . . . or what?"

"You're very sweet," he said automatically. "The trouble's with me. I don't know what I want, except that I haven't got it. In a vague, unorganized way, I keep looking for it. But I'm not even warm yet. Joel's writing a play in which there's an amnesia victim who goes around saying to everyone: 'Who am I? I wish someone would tell me who I am.' He means all of us. He's thinking of himself principally. But I've just discovered that it's me, too. I don't know who I am."

"I'll tell you," Betty murmured. "You're a darling boy whom I'll probably marry in a few years, after you're out of college."

"Ah-h-h! Perdun me, Muddam, I'm afraid you have the wrong number. You're going to marry George Webster. The crystal-gazer sees it all in the illuminated, iridescent bowl. . . . All the seventeenth century shepherdesses for bridesmaids. And you, carrying calla lilies. And George, looking like Gene Tunney, with stiff-shirt and tails hastily pulled on over boxing pants."

"I like you better even than I like George."

"Sure you do. But George fits into your design better."

"We'll talk about it when you're out of college."

"I'm not going to college."

He had not known, a moment before, that he meant to announce such a decision. But he realized, with a kind of detached awe, that he meant it firmly and unshakably.

"Of course you're going to college," Betty protested mildly. "You've told me yourself that you had to go to Harvard to make up to your mother for the fact that your brother wasn't able to go there. You couldn't disappoint your mother."

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"My mother's a wonderful woman. She just lives to sacrifice herself to other people. But I don't want any more sacrifices made for me. It will disappoint Mother. But she can take it. She has loads of character."

"You owe it to your brother. He wants you to go."

"That's the funny thing about Joel. He kids the genteel tradition all the time. But, somehow, he wants it for me. I think it's because he isn't very well. He thinks it would take a lot of guts to break away, and it tires him to think of anyone's having to work that hard. I don't think it's as tough as he imagines."

"But what is there to do, if you don't go to college?"

Bruce considered.

"I don't know," he said at last. "I might hike to New York and live with my sister, Nina, for a while. Or I might go to California. I have a sister there, too, in Hollywood."

"Not in the movies!"

"Uh-huh."

"Bruce Fraser! you never told me that!"

He laughed.

"Oh, she isn't anyone whose autograph you'd want. She just plays Irish servants who turn down beds for Clara Bow to jump on."

"She might put you in the movies, Bruce."

"I'll fight, bleed and die to prevent it. Couple of fellows who live in Butte, Montana, and I are the only people alive who don't think they can act. And I'm determined that literature shan't get me, either. We've had that long enough in our family. . . . I want to work on farms and ranches and docks, or in factories and mines. . . ."

Betty laughed incredulously.

"Well, why do you have to kid my illusions?" Bruce protested. "I'm young and healthy. There's no reason why I shouldn't work with my hands. My father did. Put himself through college, working nights at manual labor. My brother, Joel, was strong enough to go to war. I guess I have as much strength as he has."

"You'll get bored with it and come back."

"To parties in the Lincoln Club? and Wellesley proms? and

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other people's weddings? What makes you think all that is so eternally fascinating?"

"You tell me what's so fascinating about farms and factories."

"I don't know. But millions of people spend their lives and all their strength in places like that. It must be important: work that can demand the vitality of so many people."

"You won't be trained for anything when you get through, you goof."

"What'll I be trained for if I go to college? I'm not a scientist. I don't want to study law. And why should I probe into Swinburne, just to be made desperate, like Joel? Or, why should I read Spinoza, just to be filled with a vague reverence for wisdom like my mother?"

"You could study banking, or prepare yourself for the diplomatic service . . . or something."

"On the chance that you might be willing to marry me, instead of George? I don't kid myself, Betty. It takes a hell of a long time to get to be President of the National City Bank or Ambassador to one of the more chic countries."

"Darling, you're not really going to be such a fool as to run out on me . . . and all the fun?"

"Yes, I think I am."

"It sounds so silly to go off like that, just because of some goofy pride that you don't really understand yourself."

"But I do understand it. Every word I've said to you made it clearer and clearer. I want to be the First Fraser to come down out of the clouds and explore the earth."

"Well, don't try to explain it to me any more. It sounds just like *Pilgrim's Progress* or something."

"That's just what it is . . . *Pilgrim's Progress* . . . or something."

"You're not going to hop a freight tonight, are you? . . . in your brother's tuxedo?"

"Sounds like a picturesque way of starting."

"I'm afraid it would make a bad impression among your new friends, the bums."

"Oh, we wouldn't want that. I'll wait till tomorrow. In fact, I'll wait till I've been graduated in the spring."

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"And in the meantime can't we dance?"

"Sure. And darling, I'll come back for your wedding to George, if you'll let me be one of the bridesmaids. I've always wanted to carry one of those crooks and pull the leg of someone sitting in an aisle-seat. . . ."

Betty fell into step with him. They danced down the corridor and back into the ballroom.

IX

(January, 1929)

FAITH sat in a private dining-room of the Woman's City Club beside a man of whose name she was not quite certain. Mr. Blake—or was it Mr. Bloch?—had called her, three days before, to offer his invitation. But he had not made its nature at all clear. If she had known that she was to be the guest of honor at this dinner-party, she would not have come directly from the office wearing a tailored dress. The orchid corsage, with which she had been presented as she entered the dining-room, was an inappropriate ornament to her severe costume. Faith had decided not to wear it. Lying on the table before her, it looked disowned and a little melancholy. But that was really Mr. Blake's fault, not hers.

She glanced down the length of the table. At the far end sat Joel, looking rueful and unhappy, as he made conversation with the wife of Rabbi Heller, on his right, and with the wife of the assistant to the President of the University, on his left. There must be thirty guests, all of them, except herself and Joel, in evening dress. But how could anyone know that a dinner-party announced for half past five would be a formal affair? The absurdity of the whole situation made her want to laugh. But the solemnity with which Mr. Blake—or Bloch? oh, let it be Blockhead, and be damned to it!—presided over his party rebuked the gamine impulse.

"Yes, sir," he was saying, "you're going to be pretty proud of your little girl, Mrs. Fraser. She's turned in one of the swellest performances that's ever been given on the silver sheet. It's a nifty! Imperial Pitchers count on *The World Is Waiting* for the biggest gross since *Hearts Aflame*. And that's something, if you know your grosses, Mrs. F."

Faith said that she felt at home only with such comparatively

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dainty and svelte grosses as she had encountered in the mail-order department at Gordon's. The theater manager laughed robustly at this pleasantry.

"Anyhow," he continued, "this is going to be big. . . . A new chapter in the industry. Don't it make you feel good to know your little girl's going to be on top of the heap? Course, they'll never make a star out of her. She ain't so killingly young."

"My daughter is thirty," Faith said, wondering guiltily whether the admission would injure Judith's reputation in theatrical circles.

But the theater manager seemed to regard the fact as some sort of special triumph.

"There you are!" he crowed. "Plenty gals is all washed up at that age. They gen'rally always hit the skids about twenty-five and pass completely outta the pitcher by thirty. But that kid of yours has got the goods. They'll use her, all right, now that they've discovered what she's got. Personally, I never knew she had it in her, myself. I seen her in lots of silents and never give her a thought. She was O.K. . . . sure! Nothing sensational. Just good for a character bit. . . . Guess I was just a mug like the rest of the boys. But, honestly, did you think she had the goods yourself, Mrs. F.?"

It was impossible to tell this ebullient man that she had never seen any film in which Judith had appeared. The earnestness with which he regarded the triumph of *The World Is Waiting* would make her own indifference seem monstrous.

"Of course," she said thoughtfully, "you must remember that she's my daughter."

The brilliance of the theater manager's elation mellowed for a moment into tenderness.

"I know how you mothers are. I got one myself. She thinks Mrs. Bloch's boy, Julius, is a world beater and nobody couldn't make her think no different."

The name was Bloch, then. Faith felt more comfortable, as this one bit of information assumed solidity beneath her. Upon this rock she could, perhaps, construct the world in which she would have to live for a whole evening.

"You can thank the talkies for the breaks your kid got," Mr.

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Bloch proceeded, with his former eagerness. "In the ole-fashioned pitchers, she'd just've gone on in the same ole rut. I know how she happened to get a chance at the big part in *The World Is Waiting*."

In the professional story-teller's excitement, he caught up his fork and began making lines on the tablecloth.

"You see, there was this script that Imperial Pitchers paid plenty jack for. The author was this woozis that writes all-a time for the women's magazines. They was going to make it as a silent. Peggy Laird was all set for it."

He made a cross with his fork. It was evidently intended to stand for Miss Laird, holding herself in eager readiness to play the leading rôle in *The World Is Waiting*.

"All right," he said as though to suggest that a nice point had been established. "But along come the talkies . . . and blooey!"

The fork dug cruelly at the cross that had been Miss Laird, obliterating all trace of her wistful readiness.

"I can tell you Imperial Pitchers was nearly crazy. They go nuts out there when anything unusual happens. Peggy Laird's a swell-looking dame. You seen her, a-course."

It seemed simpler to nod in agreement.

"But, my God! she can't talk. Never had to when she was with Ziegfeld. Just wore those plumes and walked like a queen should walk. Well, Mr. Wolfe—that's the President of Imperial Pitchers—he just hit the ceiling. 'She can't talk the English language,' he says. 'Fer Christ's sake, get me someone that can talk the English language.'"

Mr. Bloch looked up, abashed by his own histrionic emphasis. It had, indeed, drawn the attention of nearly all the guests to his corner of the table.

"I shouldn't of said that," he whispered. "But I was just saying what Mr. Wolfe said."

Faith smiled reassuringly.

"I've been in business for twelve years, Mr. Bloch. I don't suppose I've missed many of the words that people use when they get excited. Beside, I had a husband and I have sons."

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If only For Christ's sake! were the worst of the audacities with which Joel's plays had made her perfectly familiar!

Mr. Bloch expressed his relief with a smile that took in the whole table. He resumed his story once more.

"Well then, here's Judith Armitage."

He made a cross, close to the lines indicating the script of *The World Is Waiting* . . . closer even than the unfortunate Miss Laird had once been.

"She knows the ropes of the studios. She's been in pitchers nearly ten years. She can look like a kid. Or she can look like an ole woman. And by golly! if she can't talk. So Wolfe says: 'O.K. let her try it. She can't do worse than Laird done.' . . . And damned if little Armitage don't go into her dance and get hot. She gives 'em this and she gives 'em that. And boy! do they lap it up. Why, I was in the studio one day, catching one of her scenes, when everyone in the place just bust out applauding, like it was a reg'lar show."

Faith leaned forward.

"Mr. Bloch, what is it, do you think, that makes my daughter so effective in *The World Is Waiting*?"

Mr. Bloch dropped back thoughtfully into his chair.

"Well, I never did set up to be no critic. What I know is the box-office angle. But Judith Armitage has got what it takes. A little of this—you know—zowie! and a little of what-you-call-it . . . sensibility. And it all adds up to murder at the ole b.o."

He evidently had no notion of how completely unintelligible his conversation had become. Faith had to be satisfied with knowing that murder at the box office meant superlative fineness.

"No, sir," Mr. Bloch continued. "Judith don't have to worry from now on. She's sitting pretty. The world's waiting for her, all right. Things is gonna be different out there than they was. Used to be, a Follies gal could just step in there and mug her way through any part. Sure she could walk like a lady! Ziegfeld taught her that much. But with langwage, it's something else again. The scripts is gonna be more refined and they gotta have a lot of refined types. There's hard words in a script like *The*

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World Is Waiting. You take a word like propinquity. A girl's got to go ahead and know what it means."

So, at last, Judith's background had become an asset. She could take a word like propinquity and dazzle Hollywood by knowing what it meant. Faith smiled.

"Yes, you can smile, all right," Mr. Bloch said approvingly. "She's in the money. Sure makes you feel good, I'll bet, to know that all the advantages you and Mr. Fraser give her are going to count. A girl with an edjocation can walk into any studio out there, right now, and tell just what she wants. . . . And she'll get it."

It was for this that David had worked his way through the University, straining his back under manual labor. . . . It was for this that she herself had sat for hours in the Atheneum at Onondaga. . . . So that Judith, who had floundered her way through a few years of high school, could seem like a cultivated creature.

This was success! There could be no rewards for any of her other children. Nina's books, wrought delicately out of irony and insight, attracted only fleeting attention. Joel's plays, in each of which there was a kind of bitter, angry truth, could not find a producer. Bruce had run away from the family tradition. He had written to her from South Carolina where he was working in a textile mill that he was afraid of nothing except becoming another desperately unhappy person like Joel. He was running away from the things of the mind that his mother had always held to be sacred. Bruce preferred working with his hands; living among people whom he described in his letters as starved physically, mentally and morally. This sacrifice of his proper place in the world had become some sort of religion with him. She had given up the effort to understand it.

She had always said to herself that Bruce was a stranger. But she had not known how completely unfamiliar his temperament was until he had disappeared, after being graduated from Mr. Merton's school. Bruce had said that he and George Webster were going to drive to California and see the country. And then he simply had not come back. His letter, admitting that he had

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given up the idea of going to college, had been full of a kind of wild excitement. "I've never felt that I belonged to an organic life," he had written. "I must look around and find the life I belong to."

Some rebuke intended for herself lay hidden in Bruce's hints at a cloudy dissatisfaction with all that she had tried to do for him. She had read his letters over and over, trying to discern the nature of her mistake. But Bruce gave her almost no help. Though his letters described human misery such as she had not known existed, there was an irrepressible buoyance to their tone. He was happy in his new religion of trying to understand human suffering; happier than he had ever been with her. She must let him go.

As she thought of Bruce and Nina and Joel, it seemed to her that her life had been, not the clear statement of moral values that she had intended it to be, but simply an awkward pause between two very different kinds of utterances. Her father had believed in the excellent life. His whole existence had declared his devotion to honesty, to integrity, to moral beauty. Her children apparently believed in nothing. They stated their doubts with appalling emphasis. Nina's novels had distinction. Joel's plays had power. But everything they wrote expressed the same negative philosophy. Their characters were always foredoomed to disaster. It was not the noble failure of the men and women in classic tragedy. Nothing but a flippant, angry futility. Because their lives were hollow, her own seemed hollow, too.

But Judith had success! Apparently triumph was reserved for those who were willing to vulgarize emotion to the point where it roused Mr. Bloch's enthusiasm.

"Tell you another thing about that kid of yours," the theater manager demanded her attention once more. "She's going to knock 'em cockeyed with her clothes. She'll go down in movie history as the best dressed woman on the screen. Doesn't get a chance to show them in this pitcher. But you should see the stills Imperial is sending out. I ain't afraid to say that a year from now she'll be known as the best dressed woman that ever trespassed the American stage."

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With that triumphant declaration, he rose.

"We gotta get on over to the theater. I want you there for the first evening show. That's why we hadda have dinner so early. They's a nice little surprise waiting for you. We'll just slip out the side way."

He picked up Faith's corsage and put a hand under her elbow to help her rise. Faith drew her arm away. Simply because she was the mother of a movie heroine, it really wasn't necessary to treat her as though she were decrepit. Mr. Bloch's solicitude partook too much of the nature of an undertaker's soothing graces.

"I came with my son, Mr. Bloch. We have our car."

"If you'll give me the keys, I'll see that it gets taken home. We have other plans for you. Which is your boy? I'll call to him to skip downstairs and meet us at the side door."

"Oh, please, Mr. Bloch! Just let me get his attention. He was wounded in the War. It has left him . . . lame, and he hates to be made conspicuous. Won't you just go down? We'll meet you. . . ."

When they stopped in front of the theater, Mr. Bloch's huge car drew the attention of a crowd of people. Faith thought, for a moment, that there had been a street accident. The whole scene looked unfamiliar. Great lights shone on the pavement and in the theater lobby. A throng of curious observers, held back by ropes, pressed forward on either side of the lane through which they passed. Just inside the lobby, Mr. Bloch paused. Holding tight to Faith's arm, he said:

"Well, how do you like it? Ain't it great! Just like a reg'lar Hollywood opening." He hesitated as though the magnificence of which he was the author had awed even himself. "But it's no more'n right. Ain't every day we have a home town girl making good in a big way."

"Can't we get in out of this zoo?" Joel scolded.

"One more little surprise for you!" Still holding Faith's arm, Mr. Bloch led her to a microphone. "O.K., Joe?" he questioned.

"You're on the air," a voice answered.

Mr. Bloch turned to the microphone.

"Good evening, everybody. Well, here we are at the Cosmo-

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politan Theater for the opening of *The World Is Waiting*, the pitcher the world is waiting to see. I wish you could see everything just as I'm seeing it, this minute. The crowds just milling around on the sidewalk, watching the celebrities arrive. . . . The Kleig lights . . . The excitement . . . You might think it was atchelly Hollywood. We're here to do honor to a little girl whom you all know and love. When she was just a modest, little girl playing in the grounds of her father's big estate, you knew her as Judith Fraser. But the world is going to know her as Judith Armitage, featured player of the pitcher we're going to see tonight. You knew and honored her father. He was Guv'nor of this State of Wisconsin."

"No, no," Faith whispered. "Mayor of Drummond."

Mr. Bloch laughed cozily into the microphone.

"Guess I wanted to honor him a little too much. I've been corrected. He was Mayor of our town. But he should of been Guv'nor. And I think you know he would of been if he hadda lived. Anyway you honored her father. Now you're going to honor and love his daughter.

"And that isn't the only surprise I got for you. Standing beside me, at this moment, is a little woman you all know, Judith Armitage's mother. And her brother, too. They still live with us. I wish you could see them, with their eyes just glistening with love and anticipation and pride. Just like you'd be if your daughter and your sister had made good. Maybe Judith's mother would surprise you. She's not the little, gray lady we all think of as mother. She's the modrun type . . . a business woman. But her fingers are care-worn for her little ones, just the same. I'm going to ask her to say a few words to you."

Mr. Bloch pulled Faith toward the microphone. She drew resolutely away.

"I couldn't do that, Mr. Bloch. No, I really couldn't."

"Aw, don't be bashful," he urged good-naturedly. "You can talk to an audience if you just try. Just say: 'Hello folks! I love you for loving my daughter.' . . . Something like that."

"No, I mean it, Mr. Bloch. I won't."

He turned to the microphone once more.

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"Well, folks, I'm sorry! Mrs. Fraser's gone shy on me. Guess she's just the ole-fashioned mother, after all. I'm going to let someone else speak for her. He's just a boy, really. But, in the War, he gave what he had to offer for his country just like his sister gives her genius to the silver sheet. Folks, Judith Armitage's brother and our own hero. . . ."

"If I go up there, it'll be to tell them all to go to hell," Joel warned.

Mr. Bloch seized the microphone hastily.

"That was Joel Fraser, folks, saying he hopes you'll all enjoy the show. If you didn't hear him good, it's because he's modest, too. We are going inside to see the show. We'll be back on the air in an hour and a quarter to listen in on the speeches of congratulation from the stage of the Cosmopolitan Theater. You'll be hearing from us. . . . Good-bye, now. . . . Take it away, Joe."

When they were in their seats at last, Joel continued to scold and threaten.

"I damn near popped that bastard one on the nose. What does he mean by exploiting us like that? Why in hell are we here?"

"Hush, darling, please. People will hear you. I had no idea it would be like this. You believe that, don't you?"

"Oh, of course, Mother. I'm sorry. It was worse for you, having to sit with that slimy son-of-a-bitch all evening."

"Joel, please."

The picture began. It was strange . . . incredibly strange and fascinating . . . to see this child whom she had borne, whom she had had near to her for twenty years, isolated, enthroned, glorified there on the screen. Her beauty was Judith's beauty, but Judith's beauty with some magic added. A magic which removed all the identifying and individualizing flaws. This creature was foreign in her perfection. Yet when she spoke, the accent was Judith's own. The voice woke every memory that had lain buried, under other preoccupations, during all the years when, as Faith would have said, she had remembered Judith hardly at all.

Faith could close her eyes and see the baby, the child, the girl, the woman. . . . In just that mischievous tone, Judith had once

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cried out gleefully, after a tumble over an embankment. "See me jump!" she had crowed, just as she crowed now on the screen. . . . Yes, that note of piteousness was familiar. The old Judith had used it to plead that she must be operated on for appendicitis. . . . And in her big scene of righteous indignation, Faith's daughter spoke again. Those were the tones that Judith had used to denounce her mother for spending all the family funds on Nina's wedding.

But, in the film, all this symphony of sound was made to play, almost unbearably, on the listener's sympathy. The mischievousness, the piteousness, the noble rage: they were all to the credit of the character who suffered and still was staunch and unyielding.

Judith played the rôle of a school-teacher who fell in love with a young engineer and consented to enter with him into a secret marriage. Their relationship was represented as charming. With delicate sensibility, the young woman corrected the man's crudities and improved his speech. When he would have yielded to a dishonest impulse, she prevented it, with resolute integrity, and made his seeming rectitude greatly improve his standing in the community.

The daughter she bore him was their mutual delight. A charming scene showed the three romping together on the beach. The father tossed the child in the water, while the mother looked on, frightened, indulgent, stoical, all at once. When the baby was caught by a wave out of the father's arms, it was the man who became hysterical and the woman who rushed into the water and brought the child back to safety.

Halfway through the film, this portentous and threatening undertone increased in volume. The man grew restless and querulous. At last he disappeared. The mother sat with her child on her lap, singing: "Oh, dear, what can the matter be? Johnnie's so long at the fair." And at this moment, the onlookers saw the man running away, back to the wife from whom he had been estranged, away from the girl whom he had never really married.

The film continued with the mother teaching school once more; suffering the hostility of a community that had decided to

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regard her as a woman who paraded, without shame, the existence of an illegitimate daughter. One scene, in the time of the War, showed her tearfully attempting to erase her name from a list that publicly denounced her as a slacker for failure to buy Liberty Bonds. The spectator was aware of the touching reason. The mother was hoarding her savings to pay for an operation necessary to save her child's sight.

Later, she was shown stoically receiving the news that the operation had been a failure and that the only hope lay with a specialist in New York. The film's scene of climactic irony came when the mother had travelled East and come upon the discovery that the man whom she had thought to be her husband was living in comfort and respectability with another woman and a family of older children. When she went to the man's home to demand care for herself and her daughter, the plight of the true wife, doomed to permanent invalidism, so touched her that she left without explaining her visit.

While she waited for an appointment with the surgeon, the mother received a letter from her own town, telling her that she had been dismissed from her school and that she must not return. In desperation, she arranged a sham suicide, leaving a note which committed her daughter to the father's care.

The final scenes showed the mother supporting herself under humiliating conditions as companion to an irascible old woman. She learned that her daughter was to be married and, on a rainy night, stood in the shrubbery outside a window to watch the ceremony. Her face was radiant with fulfillment, while the rain poured over her cheeks. Presently the daughter and the bridegroom came to the window and opened it for a moment. The mother flattened her shoulders against the wall and listened, in hiding, to their conversation. It had been perfect, the bride murmured. . . . Yes, the wedding had been without flaw, except for one thing. "I wish my mother could have been here," she whispered. "Perhaps," the young man answered tenderly, "perhaps she is here. . . . Who knows?" . . . Then, as the strains of *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise* came from the ball room, the

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mother trudged through the puddles in the garden path, back to her own life of desolation.

When the film was over, there were speeches of congratulation from the Mayor of Drummond and the Superintendent of Schools. With tearful eloquence, they declared that a new era of clean entertainment had begun.

Faith and her son slipped through a side door into the street.

In the taxi, on the way home, Faith thought of what she had seen. She resented the film's assured and confident way of dragging sentiment through a morass of mawkishness. The symbolism of the final scene, which made the rain represent the tears which the mother resolutely refused to shed, was typical of its whole method. The story was designed to suggest that the essential quality of motherhood was a certain sacrificial helplessness. Why couldn't a woman fight for her husband, for her child? Faith herself had done so.

There were points in which the scenario paralleled her own history and these irritated her most of all. Like the woman in the film, she had saved her husband, at a crucial moment, from making a great blunder. Like her, too, she had supported her family when the obligation arose. But everything in the film had been at once superficial and overdone. It began to seem to Faith like a grotesque caricature of her own experience. And Judith! . . . Judith had given an overblown burlesque of her own mother: a little austere, as Faith knew herself to be; wearing always a mask of resolution. It was amusing that Judith, of all people in the world, should have been given that particular assignment . . . this girl, who had hated her mother; hated the tradition for which her mother stood; hated everything, except a kind of easy exhibitionism. And, out of her exhibitionism, she had created success, by sentimentalizing everything in her background that she had scornfully repudiated. Fate loved a practical joke, particularly one of very questionable taste.

She realized, presently, that Joel had fallen into one of his lethargic silences. Since Bruce had gone away, he was more and more subject to such moods. She must woo him out of it quickly.

"How did you like the picture, Joel?"

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He roused himself as though with a physical effort.

"Oh, it was just the usual scented swill, wasn't it?"

Joel's ruthless, cynical judgments always made her feel that she must take the opposite view. Somehow, it was for his sake that she did so. She must fight his negativism; must spur him to some kind of active interest.

"It had the appeal."

"Oh, don't make me talk about it, Mother. I'll only say the things that a sorehead, who can't get his own work taken seriously, would say."

Then, after a pause, he went on:

"What I mind is that it takes all the agreeable, pathetic stuff of human emotion and carves it up into absurd sentimental statuettes, labelled: Mother Love, Radiant and Mother Love, Betrayed. It makes all decent sentiment seem somehow disreputable. One is ashamed of the tears that come to one's eyes and mad as hell at the lump that comes into the throat. It's the worst kind of vulgarity to make the major virtues seem like minor vices."

He was right, of course. She could not draw him out, further, without encouraging him to launch desperately into one of his orgies of scolding.

"How did you like Judith?" she asked.

"I hardly remembered that it was Judith," Joel sighed. "She always bored me. Her physical aches and pains used to make me want to die of sheer exhaustion. Her spiritual aches and pains, in the film, didn't bore me. They made me sore. Do you suppose that's an improvement?"

Suddenly, Faith found that there were tears in her eyes. They were tears of pity not for Joel, but for Judith. If she could know with what indifference, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say with what mild antagonism, they had watched her triumph, her pride would be injured.

From first to last, Faith thought, no one gets enough praise. I never praised Judith when she was a child. She might have been a more interesting and valuable person in the world if she had been taught to value her gifts. Judith had been neglected because

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Nina and Joel were always more demanding children. She could see Judith, in that instant, as a lonely and pathetic figure.

"Joel," she called out suddenly, "stop the driver."

They drew up at the curb.

"I'm going to send a telegram of congratulation to Judith."

X

(March, 1931)

THE woman across the aisle was reading Nina's latest novel. Faith's own copy of *Fled Is That Music* lay unread in her bag. She was always afraid of Nina's books. Each of them revealed a new and unsuspected resentment against life. Each of them seemed to add further testimony to Faith's own inadequacy as a mother. If Nina would ever say outright what it was that had so demoralized her childhood, it would not be so troubling. But the hints at incommunicable subtleties of sinfulness made Faith want to beat out her brains against a stone wall.

Her neighbor in the train turned the last page and closed the book. She glanced about as though she were looking for someone with whom to talk about her literary adventure. People who read few books always wanted to discuss them at length as though there were something wonderful about being able to absorb ideas from the printed page.

The woman rose, with the book still in her hands, and crossed over to Faith's section.

"I see that you have nothing to read," she said. "Would you like to borrow my book? I've just finished."

Faith motioned to her neighbor to sit down.

"Thank you. I have a copy of the same novel in my bag."

Perhaps, she thought, I owe it to Nina to find out what casual readers are saying about her work.

"Did you like the book?" she asked aloud.

"Oh yes! They told me in the bookstore at home that it's selling very well."

Faith smiled. That, of course, was the final test of excellence. All of Nina's novels had had many points of excellence. But none of them had sold before this one. As far as the public was concerned this was her first work. It must amuse an author to be

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discovered with such zeal after years and years of unrewarded drudgery.

"Did you like it?" the woman asked.

"I haven't read it yet."

"Oh! I felt that I had to hurry through it before I get to New York. I know literary people there who are sure to be talking about it. I may meet the author."

Faith laughed aloud. The joke was too good to keep to herself.

"I'm sure to meet the author. She's my daughter."

"My goodness!" the woman exclaimed incredulously. "How thrilled you must be! And you haven't read the book yet?"

It was amusing to shock adulation so innocent.

"Well, you see, I'm very busy. I can't be bothered with the books of these young novelists until I've seen what the reviewers have to say."

This, patently, was heresy against the first principle of mother love which is that it must be blindly fatuous in its devotion. The woman's eyes widened with something very like alarm. But she almost immediately forgot her dismay in the urgency of another excitement.

"Would you put your name in my book?" she asked.

"Oh, but I couldn't do that. I had nothing to do with writing it."

"My dear, I'm sure you had a great deal to do with it, indirectly."

Yes, Faith thought, if only you knew how much I probably had to do with it indirectly, you would be more horrified than ever. *Fled Is That Music* undoubtedly proves that I was the most disastrous of mothers. I crushed all the individuality out of my children. Look upon the Gorgon's head, my dear, and be turned to stone!

The woman's hands had been searching feverishly in her bag. She produced a fountain pen.

"If you'll just write: 'From Nina Howard's mother' and sign your name. I'm going to review *Fled Is That Music* when I go back home, and it would be ever so exciting to pass my book around for the ladies of my club to see."

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It would be ridiculously rude to refuse, Faith decided. She wrote Nina's name very large and her own very small in an effort to repudiate any responsibility for this absurd act of vanity.

"And now," she said, "I think I'll read the book. You've excited my interest in it."

But when her neighbor had left her, Faith found that she was not concentrating on the page. She read the first paragraph over three times before she realized that she had not taken in its meaning at all. It was no use. She could interest herself in nothing that had indirectly to do with Nina until she had seen Nina herself. The prospect of seeing her again paralyzed all mental activity, except that of terrified day-dreaming.

When she stepped into the station, the next day, she saw Nina's face smiling out of the crowd, a long way off. But the curious aloofness of the gaze did not make Faith feel that she was being welcomed. There had always been a theatrical quality to Nina. The years had fixed this ironic detachment upon her as a kind of mannerism. Her expression seemed to say: "I shall be hideously bored with all that you have to say, just as I am bored by all my own thoughts. But I have trained myself to be indulgent. You may be and say what you like."

Even as a child, she had been like that. There were snap-shots in the family albums that made her look twice her age, whatever—at a particular moment—it might be, because of the air of brooding superiority. It was a defense against something. A defense, perhaps, against the teachers who had thought her not normally bright! A defense against the boys who had made it clear that they did not consider her pretty!

But now that she was actually middle-aged, she looked ageless. What was she really? Thirty-six. Yet she might be fifty. She might be her own mother's age. The lines of her forehead were deeply marked. The effect of pallor, deliberately accentuated by her make-up, increased the effect of smart severity. Her clothes were at once simple and eccentric. She looked like a sibyl in modern dress.

Behind her, Faith heard her neighbor from the train mumbling excitedly.

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"It's your daughter, isn't it? She's come to meet you."

Faith nodded and pushed through the crowd to reach Nina's side.

"If you don't want to be attacked by an autograph enthusiast, let's get away quickly. I met one on the train."

"Oh, my God!" Nina whispered. "Has the boy got your bags? Come on."

In the taxi, Nina gave the driver an address that was unfamiliar to Faith.

"Have you and Beverly moved?"

"No, I thought we'd go to my studio in the Village. Beverly has a lot of young students about him all the time. It's better for me to have a place of my own when I'm working hard. . . . Tell me about your new work, Mother."

Faith hesitated. She felt disinclined to be perfectly candid with Nina who was, after all, a stranger, interested only vaguely in her mother's financial affairs. But the curious awe with which Nina's writing inspired her suggested the uselessness of trying to assume a brave front. Nina would know that she was lying, if she tried to make her change of work seem advantageous.

She sighed.

"I was shuffled out of Gordon's when the depression began. There was a reorganization and a lot of doubling-up, all along the line. The assistant to the general manager took over the mail-order department. I was simply dismissed, though I had made a success of it. They seemed to feel that they had to make jobs for the men, first of all. My interests weren't considered, partly, I suppose, because they knew that I live with an employed son. It wasn't fair. But there was nothing that I could do about it."

"It isn't just," Nina cut in bitterly; "it's cruel the way they make a woman fight, twice as hard as men are required to fight, for just a modest amount of dignity and independence. As for security! that's far too much to ask. You've no idea how I have to struggle to make a living."

Nina's attack sounded like a subtle maneuver of self-defense. Could she really have imagined that her mother would ever ask her for financial help of any kind?

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"You needn't worry that I'll ever be dependent on you," she said aloud.

Nina caught at her hand.

"I didn't mean that, or anything like it, Mother. I've been wishing, lately, that you might come and live with me."

"With you and Beverly?"

There was a significant pause before Nina answered.

"You could stay at my studio, if you liked. I have to take it by the year. I'm there a great deal. We could do our writing together."

Obviously, Nina was concealing something. Probably she felt embarrassed by the evidences she gave of financial security, while she talked as though she were hard-pressed. It had become the fashion to boast of being poor. Nina would be the first to pick up such a smart affectation.

"No, it's quite out of the question, Nina. My new work on the magazine requires me to be in Drummond, except when I take these trips. Part of my work is writing articles about women who have succeeded in business or professional life. Part of it is editing, done in the office. It pays only about half what the job at Gordon's did. Joel's salary has been cut, too. But we get along well enough by pooling our resources. . . . No, you needn't worry. I'll never live to be dependent on any of my children. You can count on that. When I can't work, I can die."

"Please, don't be melodramatic, Mother," Nina said severely. "Are we going to start quarrelling immediately?"

"I'm not being melodramatic," Faith defended herself. "And I haven't the slightest intention of quarrelling with you. When I say: I can die, I don't mean to excite pity. I don't fear death. I need my work. If I can't have one, I can have the other."

She leaned forward excitedly, trying to see Nina's face.

"And why should I consent to patronage from my children," she went on. "They've never been willing to let me do anything for them. Joel wouldn't accept a post-graduate year at Harvard when I could very well have afforded it. Bruce wouldn't permit me to send him to college at all. Do you know what he's doing now? . . . Working on the assembly line in one of the automobile

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plants. Unskilled labor! I stopped off in Detroit to see him. He's a strange boy. He looks more like your father every day. But I don't recognize your father's spirit in him. He's a fanatic, in his own, queer way. He's doing dangerous things, Nina . . . trying to help the workers to organize. I'm afraid for his very safety. . . . But he preferred that to what I could have given him. Everything I've tried to do for my children has been somehow wrong. You should know what I mean, Nina, better than any of the rest."

"Then I'm stupid, Mother. I don't know what you mean."

"Nina, don't be absurd. You've sent me all your novels. Surely, you wanted me to know that each of them has contained a sly attack on every principle that I've put my faith in, on every standard I've clung to."

Nina sighed.

"It's so unsafe to write a line, isn't it? You must know that from your own work. People are determined to misunderstand. I've never intended to ridicule you, Mother. Don't you realize that a story-teller takes a stray bone of fact and reconstructs a human being out of it, just as a scientist reconstructs a prehistoric animal out of a fossilized foot or toe? Of course, writers know their methods aren't scientific. They don't have to be. The reconstructed human being isn't supposed to resemble very closely the real person who supplied the original trait of character. I've never meant you, Mother, in any of my people. Please believe that."

Oh, if she only could! Nina had no notion how terrible and afflicting were the doubts she had put into her mother's mind. . . . Yes, she would believe Nina. She had to, even if what Nina said were only partially true. There, in the taxi, she took her daughter into her arms.

Incredibly, this hard, confident woman began to cry, like a child.

"Oh Mother, you don't know how much I admire you. You're made of . . . what's the phrase? . . . 'spirit, fire and dew.' And you've some faith that I can't grasp. Nothing stops you. Not failure, or death, or wasteful, cruel things, like what has happened

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to Joel. Your banners get thrown down into the dust; but somehow you manage to catch them up again and fly them defiantly. If you don't know how much I admire that . . . if you don't know that I envy your certainty out of the bottomless depth of my uncertainty, then it's because I have a dull mind and a thick tongue and I don't know how to make myself clear."

She settled against her mother's shoulder, pulling off her hat and throwing it irritably on the floor of the car.

"And there's more to say. It's that I love you. I think of you all the time. I say to myself: What would Mother do if she faced this crisis? What would Mother want me to do? . . . I couldn't need you more, or depend on you more than I do. The distance between us has made no difference . . . no difference at all."

In fourteen years, Faith thought, nothing so soothing, so reassuring as this has happened to me. My doubts of Nina have been unfair. The accusations were of my own imagining.

She laid a hand on Nina's shoulder.

"Mother loves you too, dear child. Mother understands."

Abruptly Nina straightened up and reached for her hat.

"This is absurd!" she laughed ruefully. "I accuse you of being melodramatic and then I put on a Duse act like this. I'm sorry."

Don't apologize, Faith's mind pleaded. Don't take it back!

They stepped from the taxi into one of the crowded, mean-looking streets of the section that Faith had never learned to understand. Nina lives in the slums, she thought agitatedly, until she saw that they were standing before an unexceptionably clean and characterless building. A uniformed doorman ushered them across the threshold and carried Faith's bags to the elevator.

Nina's studio had a bedroom and bath, a kitchenette, and a large workroom and living-room combined. It was austere, almost inadequately furnished and decorated only with a few pictures of glaring, hostile ugliness.

"Don't be alarmed by the paintings," Nina said lightly. "They've just been lent to me by friends who go in for Modigliani goiters and Rouault disintegration. You'll get used to them. You'll even come to love them if you live with them long enough."

Somehow, the whole setting dramatized Nina herself too

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poignantly. Nina's queer mixture of severity and tenderness was in it; and her bleakness; and her irony and humor; and, most of all, her loneliness. They were all here, in the place that she had made her own. A fear for Nina crept chillingly over Faith. She dreaded to know and longed to know the thing her daughter had been hiding.

"Shall we see Beverly tonight, Nina?"

Once more there was a perceptible instant of hesitation.

"I don't know what his plans are, Mother. We can call on the telephone and find out if he's busy. I know he'd love to see you. I'm going to the theater. I had hoped you'd go with me. But if you want very much to see Beverly, right away. . . ."

Faith caught her daughter by the shoulders.

"Darling, what's wrong? You needn't be afraid to tell me. I know there's something."

Nina dropped with a sigh onto the sofa, drawing her mother down beside her.

"I don't know why I tried to conceal it, except that it's all so confused. I haven't got anything straight myself. Beverly and I are separated."

This dully-spoken confirmation of her fears left Faith silent, for a moment. She was abashed by Nina's passionless misery.

"I suppose I should have known," Faith said at last, "when you brought me to your studio."

"No, it isn't as simple as that. I haven't walked out and slammed the door, like a new version of Nora. I've had this place for a long time. It's as I told you: Beverly is surrounded by students all the time. He doesn't know yet that I shall never go back to him. He won't care much when he does know, except that his pride may be injured a little. I've thought that perhaps we would go on for years like this, with no word said, with no vulgar definiteness. Beverly hates vulgarity. And he won't want a divorce, I'm sure. I don't think I shall ever care particularly, one way or the other."

"But what happened, Nina?"

Faith thought of the time when she had threatened to leave David. There must have been a quarrel like that, between Nina

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and Beverly . . . something bitter and terrible, involving a crucial issue. But what could it be? There were likely to be no moral differences between Nina and Beverly. They lived in the same intellectual atmosphere. Beverly was intensely honorable. And there was a look of unassailable integrity about Nina, too.

"Happened?" Nina repeated the word as though it puzzled me. "Nothing happened. I suppose that is what causes separations between modern people: just that nothing happens. Beverly doesn't love me. That's all. I suppose perhaps a psycho-analyst would say that he had lived a celibate existence too long to have a real appetite for domesticity. Perhaps he's undersexed, too. That isn't his fault. A love of learning seems to have taken the place of all other passion in him. He gets more pleasure out of debates with his students than I was ever able to give him. I don't mean that he's abnormal. I know he isn't, in any overt way. He just isn't interested in me. It's largely my fault, I think. I have an ironic outlook. It's a point of view that frays out into doubts and disbeliefs and mildly humorous approximations of knowledge. Beverly has an exact mind, a scientific mind. He doesn't like disorderly things. He doesn't like anything, really, that can't be reduced to a formula. And since sex can't be, he has just given up thinking about it."

She talked with an air of patient detachment that seemed to Faith dismally tragic. Marriages should end, if they had to end, as they began: with passion. A passion of resentment, if necessary. This indifference that Nina displayed so candidly, was appalling. And yet Faith knew that, beneath the surface of her calm desolation, the rat of misery was gnawing. It was almost as though she could hear the sound of relentless, slow destruction as an undertone in Nina's voice.

"Did you ever love Beverly?" she asked.

"I don't know. Two years after we were married I began to think that I cared for him tremendously. I imagined that his polite indifference to me would do something theatrical, like breaking my heart. I rather hoped it would. But indifference is highly contagious, and finally I caught it. That's the whole story of my love-life."

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Nina laughed.

"I think an editor would say that it was under-developed. . . . I should have married Bernard Buholtz when I had the chance. I excited him. He interested and irritated me. I think our nervous preoccupation with each other was love. If I had married him there would have been some quickening of life in me that I've missed entirely. Bernard's all right. He didn't miss it. I heard him speak at a conference of psychologists. He has lost all his crudity. There's no hint of the tar-paper shanty origin about him now. . . . Oh, I don't mean to say that I fell in love with him again. My vanity wouldn't let me. After all, I wasn't the author of his calm assurance. He has a charming wife. I met her at a tea and we talked about Joel. She used to know him . . . rather well, I gathered."

"Why didn't you marry Bernard, Nina?"

Faith knew what the answer would be. Asking the question was like lifting a whip over her own back. But she felt the flagellant's grim compulsion.

Nina rose and walked to the desk. She began arranging papers on it with an air of distracted busyness.

"How can you say," Nina began slowly, as though she were groping in the dark from one word to the next, "how can you say what makes a bewildered young person do one thing or fail to do another? I suppose, perhaps, it was because I hadn't the courage to face the challenge of Bernard's crude honesty and his undisciplined strength."

"You're not telling the truth. You think I prevented it."

A paper weight dropped from Nina's hand and clattered against an ash-tray.

"No, I don't, Mother. Perhaps I did once. But things aren't as simple as that. I wanted to please you, of course. And I knew you disliked Bernard. I think I had a Puritanical notion that if one did the hardest thing possible, one was most likely to do what was right. But so many other things became involved. I had wrapped Beverly up in romantic illusion from the time I was twelve years old. I used to look at him, languishingly, through all those years when he was first a guest at our house. I'd see you

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talking to him earnestly and imagine that someday I'd be sitting beside him, talking earnestly. . . . And then I had a silly row with Bernard on the day when Beverly proposed to me. Bernard had invited me to lunch. He was greedy about his food and sullen about the War. I saw in him everything that was cheap. Immediately afterward, I saw, in Beverly, everything that was fine and mature. All my values were momentarily stood on their heads. It happened to be an enormously important moment. . . . Or perhaps I simply didn't have any values of my own."

"You had only the values that I had forced on you. Is that what you mean?"

Nina came back to the sofa and took both of her mother's hands.

"It's a mistake for us to talk about it. You think you can be quite reasonable and wise about it. You can now. But, afterward, you'll resent everything I've said. Let's not talk about it any more."

"No, darling, I have to understand. Your father used to say that I could always argue myself into a good temper. You needn't be afraid that I'll quarrel with you."

"It's a mistake," Nina sighed. "I know so much about resentment! I was arguing myself out of it in all those books I wrote when I began to be miserable about Beverly. And I have come out of it. This is the truth, Mother. For a long time, I was nothing but malleable stuff in your hands. You disliked me, rather, when I was a child. You thought I wasn't very bright. I knew I was bright. I was determined to make you see it. You did at last. It excited me almost unbearably when we became close friends. We were closest of all just before I was married. I wanted nothing so much as to take on your imprint. That's why I married Beverly. . . . It was a mistake. But it was no one's fault, least of all yours. You wanted only to do what was best for me. I used to say to you: 'You make such a good time for us, when you try.' I understood that you were just trying to make a good time for me, a good life, when you urged Beverly on me, in place of Bernard."

"You're a good child . . . a good child," Faith murmured.

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But it doesn't comfort me much, Faith thought, to realize that Nina remembers the past so clearly. I did try to make a good life for her. But it was somehow the wrong thing to do. Perhaps I tried too hard.

"Mother, there's something else you must realize, if you want to get the whole thing straight."

Nina took Faith's chin in her hand and gazed fixedly into her mother's eyes. It was as though she were the older woman, trying to impress a child with a crucial point of discipline.

"I wasn't the only one who was desperately anxious to please you. There was Beverly, too. He understood that you were harassed with problems and burdened with grief by Father's death. He wanted to relieve you of one responsibility. That's why he married me."

"Oh no, no, Nina. He really admired your intellectual gifts."

"He thought I might turn out to be like you, Mother. That was his touching hope. I think it must be the strangest psychological link that has ever existed. Beverly loved you. I think you are the only woman who ever really stirred him. He was trying to identify himself with you, by marrying me."

A violent protest started all the old doubts of Nina's loyalty whirring through Faith's mind. It was as though a dynamo were pounding behind her temples. The impulse had to be expressed in action. She rose and began pacing the floor.

"That's your damnable modern psychology, Nina. You look for perversities and tortured impulses everywhere. You see them writhing under the surface of every relationship. . . . Your books are full of that kind of emotional deviousness. . . . But I never experienced any such thing. My interest in Beverly was completely impersonal. Do you think your father would have allowed him in the house, all those years, if he had believed any such thing as you've suggested!"

"I think Father would have endured anything that he thought made you happy."

"This shows how you have always misjudged me. I wanted nothing but to help Beverly. He was shy and tormented and gifted. I did for him only what any decent woman would have done."

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"Of course, Mother. I know that your relationship to Beverly was almost childishly innocent."

The words made Faith stop short in her pacing. . . . Had it always been so childishly innocent? There had been that moment by the lake . . . the day that Bruce nearly died . . . when she had understood Beverly's feeling for her . . . when she had almost responded to it. Almost, but not quite. Surely, that made a difference! . . . Oh no, she was being punished, still, for a moment's swerving from principle. It was punishment more cruel than any insane god could devise: to have ruined the happiness of her own daughter. The whole history of her friendship with Beverly began to seem monstrous. It was like the situation in one of those distasteful plays in which a man marries the daughter of his mistress. Apparently it was a relationship more wicked than any in the most perverse play. She herself had urged Nina to marry Beverly. . . . But how could she have known? How could anyone have known that it was so serious? For years after that little, trifling episode with Beverly, she had seen him quite casually. Beverly had reverted to the rôle of trusted family friend. It seemed so natural, so inevitable, that the trusted family friend should marry the daughter. Faith had even come to doubt that the incident had had any significance at all. And now Nina told her that it had been a monstrous wrong, something that threw a shadow over her entire life.

She walked to the sofa and drew Nina once more to her.

"Dear, dear child," she said, "I'm so sorry . . . so terribly sorry."

"It's no one's fault, Mother. You couldn't help it if Beverly insisted on setting up your image as that of the inevitable woman. I couldn't help it, if I failed to replace you. It's all over and done. I'm not down and out. I have a life I like. I'm surrounded by people who like me and who think I have talent. There's a very great deal in my daily experience that gives me deep satisfaction. And you are entirely responsible for the sort of pleasure I take in my life. You've given me what I live by, and I love you for it."

She drew away and rose briskly.

"Now we won't talk about that any more. I'm glad we got

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through the confessional early. I knew it had to happen. It's behind us, now, and we can enjoy our time together. . . . I've arranged interviews for you with several very successful women. One's in aviation. Another's a director in the theater. . . . Oh, and I've written a story I want you to try to sell to your magazine for me."

"I was commissioned to try to get something from you, Nina."

"That's fine, then. But your editors probably won't want it. It's tortured and dismal and subterranean, like everything I write. I can't write any other way. But you do your best for me. . . . We're going out to dinner. I know you'll like the play we're going to see. . . ."

All right! Faith thought, let Nina busy herself with plans. Let her confer favors with the tactful air of asking them. She is a good child, the best of all my children and the one from whom I have deserved the least. . . . But what did I do that was so terribly wrong? Where did I turn from the path I meant to follow? I've always hurt the lives I meant to help. I hurt David by insisting grimly on honesty. I hurt Nina by trying to give her the best sort of marriage, marriage to an intellectual man whom I imagined would be the best of companions. My motives have been good, and what I've done with them has turned out badly.

My God, how is anyone to know . . . !

XI

(May, 1931)

JOEL came out of the doctor's office and rang the bell for the elevator.

It was difficult to understand what Dr. Fielding had meant about this new development in the pretty thoroughly distasteful condition of his body. A tumor, surely, was not like a freckle, a thing to be regretted mildly if one's vanity were easily touched, but otherwise ignored. Yet that was the tone Dr. Fielding had seemed to take about it. When Joel had asked directly if he would have to submit to another operation, he had been told brightly and lightly that probably it would not come to that.

At first, he had responded in the dutiful and childish way that doctors seemed to expect of their patients. It had been a relief to think that the amputation which had caused him so many years of acute humiliation was not going to demand all of his attention again.

But now, as he stood waiting, it seemed significant that Dr. Fielding had attempted to explain nothing to him. It was all very well to be blithe about the flesh grieving on other people's bones, but if a doctor had anything cheering to say, surely he might say it. Joel wished that Dr. Fielding might experience, for just one minute, the pain that had been grinding at his old injury. When doctors themselves were sick, they permitted themselves to be quite fantastically morbid. But of their patients, they firmly demanded a perfect and unquestioning fortitude.

Then, as the elevator door clanged shut behind him, Joel experienced one of the sudden stabs of doubt that had come to him occasionally ever since the beginning of his semi-invalidism. Perhaps Dr. Fielding said nothing really reassuring because there was nothing reassuring to say.

He felt suddenly imprisoned. The sound that had awakened

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terror, the ring of metal upon metal as the door closed, now seemed to have some grim finality to it. He was caught, and there was no escape . . . no escape at all.

With difficulty he restrained the impulse to cry out to the elevator boy to let him out. When the car reached the street level, he realized that he was trembling.

I am in the grip of one of the great elemental passions, he told himself. This is fear: wild, tearing, red-eyed fear. I have experienced it before. And it has always passed. In a moment this trembling will stop; this doubt will be dissipated in the light and warmth of the sun. Life will reassert itself, just as it always has. . . . When I have said that I could never write again, this dark sense of finality has hung over me. But I have always been able to drive it off by taking a clean sheet of paper before me and writing Act I at the top. I can still begin again.

But, outside the doors of the building, he moved into an unfamiliar world. The warmth, the movement, the quiet usualness of the street seemed far away. He could not draw it near.

I must know, he thought, and walked slowly toward the Library. On these steps, he had met his mother many times when she was preparing one of her papers for the Scholar Gypsies. She would sit for hours in the reference room, taking notes in her fine, spidery hand. At the closing hour, he would join her at the foot of the stairs and they would go home together, talking of what she had learned.

He would go, now, to her table and find out what it was so necessary that he should know.

The books were extremely direct and explicit. A tumor appearing where once there had been a bone injury might very well be a sarcoma. A sarcoma was a painful, malignant growth.

With the worst of his fears justified, Joel felt strangely quieted. It was almost amusing that the doctor had thought him so easy to deceive. The truth must be that other people were easier to deceive, more docile, than he. And probably they were right, those others. It was better not to know that you had fallen heir to one of the ills before which medical science was helpless. Once you knew, there was no protest to be made except that of indulging

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in a prolonged, panic-stricken scream. It would cause an inexpensive diversion, here in this room, if he were to scream. He felt almost as though he owed it to the half-bored occupants to jog their lives out of a dismal routine. But the service would be, after all, one of momentary value. They would have to return to routine immediately afterward.

He himself would presently have to seek the protection of impersonal busyness. Though he knew, now, that he was existing under the whimsical indulgence of chance which had not yet decided whether his death would occur in six months, in a year, or in two years, he must sit in docile stupidity on the copy-desk, writing headlines which communicated the big news: WESTERN HEIGHTS PTA TO ENTERTAIN. . . . The awful interval of waiting would be humorously devoted to celebrating the idiotic futility of the activities with which men, who had many years before them, wasted their days.

He thought of Bruce. There was no one else whom he wished to have near him in this emergency. He could not tell his mother. Perhaps he would not even tell Bruce, if he were here in Drummond. But it would be a comfort simply to have him within reach.

Oh, I would tell him, he thought with bitter self-reproach. I would hang myself around his neck and beg for pity.

Yes, it was fortunate that Bruce had broken away from a family relationship for which there was no future. Bruce had work in which he believed. During periods when he was laid off from the automobile factory, he attended labor congresses. He had become the complete delegate, filled with a zeal for the religion of collective bargaining. When he said: "A man has a right to say something about the conditions under which he sells his labor," his eyes were the eyes of Savonarola and his voice was the voice of John the Baptist. . . . He had a faith, and nothing should be allowed to distract him from it.

Joel rose and left the library. His noon-hour still was only half gone. He could do nothing better with his time than to go and have a drink.

As he turned the corner and came within sight of the Hotel

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Drummond, he remembered that a prolonged drunken party was going on in the pent-house. The boys from the Record had been running in and out for the past three days. They returned to work feeling very high and pleased with themselves. Joel decided to join the party.

A high-ball was put into his hands the moment he crossed the threshold. A dozen men, in various stages of intoxication, were milling cheerfully about the room. Mike Barclay, who could drink for three days steadily and look, at the end of the endurance contest, as though he had stepped from *Vanity Fair's* page for the well-dressed man, detached himself from the group, standing near the table where drinks were being mixed, and came toward Joel.

"I want to show you something really beautiful," he said. "You've never seen Dick Hosmer in such an exquisite state of disintegration."

Joel allowed himself to be led toward the bedroom of the suite. From the doorway, he saw what had inspired Mike's amusement. Two men, each of whom weighed more than two hundred pounds, had fallen asleep on the same twin bed. Their enormous posteriors were heaved, back to back, on the center of the narrow surface. The sides of the bed sagged under the bulk of the two bodies. The men held their positions in delicate and precarious balance.

"Aren't they like two dainty cherubs, fallen asleep on a cloud-bank?" Mike cried gleefully. "Of course it would never occur to the bright minds, belonging to the advertising manager of the Record and the Director of the Drummond Institute, that there is a bed apiece on which they could be perfectly comfortable in their lovely stupors. No, they have to pass out on the same bed. We're laying bets on how long Dick Hosmer can hang there in space before he falls on his goddamn nose. Like to put a little money on it, Joel?"

As though this irreverent hope for a quick fall had had sufficient weight to disturb the balance in which he insecurely rested, Dick Hosmer pitched suddenly onto the floor. The crash brought all the drinkers, crowding about Joel in the doorway. They thrust

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their heads over his shoulders, arguing heatedly about which of them had won the pool.

Dick Hosmer sat up in angry bewilderment.

"What son-of-a-bitch did that?" he roared.

The clamor finally roused the Director of the Institute. He rolled over on the bed and reached blindly for the Gideon Bible.

"The lesson for today my friends," he intoned in sonorous burlesque of the ecclesiastical manner, "is from Doo-ter-rominy." He felt vaguely that something was wrong. "Doo-ter-rominy," he repeated. "Well, God damn it, that's what it says. . . . Oh hell, let's read the Psalms."

Someone behind Joel shouted: "Boy! there's literature! Make your belly turn over with the beauty of it all . . . and the pain of it all."

Mike Barclay began struggling through the door.

"Let me out of here, if you're going to read the Psalms. I never could stomach that whining bastard. . . . Always giving God Almighty hell for not taking better care of little David."

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want," the Director of the Institute began shouting above the confusion.

The cavalier lack of interest in his hurts roused Dick Hosmer to further protest.

"I suppose you guys think it's damn funny, pushing a man out of bed," he roared as he caressed a thigh. "A man could break a leg, falling out of bed like that!"

"Make it your neck, Dick, and we'll all be willing to settle."

" . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. . . ."

The Director of the Institute suddenly collapsed. With a great groan, he heaved his body once more into its former position on the edge of the bed. Dick Hosmer picked himself up from the floor. Murmuring half-finished imprecations, he put a knee onto the mattress to which the other man's body had given a dangerous list. Then, with a shrewd air of thinking things out and of foreseeing, this time, every possible emergency, he climbed up, fitting his buttocks into the convenient curve behind the knees of the Director of the Institute.

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A shout of derision went up from the group in the doorway. Two men became helpless with laughter and, stumbling forward into the room, fell on the other bed.

"Hold your hats, boys, here they go again," someone called out to the group that had drifted back to the bar.

Mike Barclay came and stood beside Joel.

"Well, I'll be a bow-legged strip-tease dancer," he murmured with a kind of awe. "You wouldn't think that even an advertising manager could be as dumb as that."

He walked away, shaking his head.

Joel followed him into the living-room of the suite and took another highball from the table.

"Whose party is this anyway?" he asked Hank Martin.

"Jeez, I don't know. The gang it began with has all gone home to sleep off their hangovers. We're the reserves and they forgot to tell us who we're fighting for. Anyone know who's putting forth?"

No one knew.

"Oh, it's probably just one of the usual exploiting bastards, buying up our collective editorial soul. In a depression like this you can't be choosy about who you let buy." He assumed an arch expression. "Did Mamma say to be sure to tell your little host you'd had a nice bun?"

"No, it was just idle curiosity."

Joel took his highball away from the others and sat down by the bookshelf.

No one know's who's giving the party, he thought. There might be a play in that idea. A symbolical something-or-other, with man stumbling through a long orgy, not knowing whether his host is God or the devils. . . . Oh no, he decided. It sounded too much like the sort of allegorical bushwah which the musical comedy producers used to love. He remembered one horror in which a stringy, unappetizing, piping-voiced ingenue, wearing black tights, had come down center-stage announcing unpersuasively: "I'm Passion."

Still, it would be nice to know who was giving the party. Mother had always seemed to know. But she could never make

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it quite clear what it was that she believed so intensely. The excellent life! . . . That was her phrase. But she had never definitely defined what she meant by excellent. Excellent for whom? . . . Excellent because of what specific qualities?

Mother was Victorian in all her thinking. She liked those fine, glittering generalities. The big shots among the Victorian poets all peddled the same kind of idealism. Joel remembered something in Tennyson. . . . *In Memoriam*, it must be. . . . He turned to the bookshelf to see if two or three inches of Tennyson might have been bought to fill up the shelves in this super-elegant suite. His eye lit on the Oxford Book of English Verse and he took it down.

Yes, there it was in shameless print:

"I stretch lame hands of faith and grope,
And gather dust and chaff and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Golly, that was worse even than he had remembered it as being. It wasn't fair to Mother to associate her faith with a philosophy as gutless as that. She didn't faintly trust the larger hope. Whatever it was she trusted, she trusted with vigor. She could not have taken as many socks on the nose and still have preserved her dignity and fortitude and resolution, if there were not something more vital to sustain her. Only a poet laureate, leading a very comfortable life under the patronage of our own dear Queen, could write fine, brave sentiments about faintly trusting the larger hope. . . . I faintly wash with the softer soap. . . . I faintly dispense the dopier dope. . . . Ugh!

I shall never know, he thought, what it is that has kept Mother going. But I've come to admire her again. And I'm glad. I had to free myself from her domination. I had to get over being disappointed because she doesn't like my work. But all that has been accomplished. I can see once more how gallant she has always been. Whatever her strength may be, it is beautiful and touching. The Angel of Resolution is always at her side. She sees an-

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other duty to be done, and another, and another. She will go on, that way, until the end.

Oh, her angel does not keep her from making mistakes. Terrible ones, like that of loving me too much. But they are the mistakes of over-eagerness and generosity. They are the mistakes of innocence. Like a child, she runs forward, offering this good thing and that. She insists on their being held and valued by other people. She never hesitates out of policy or discretion or worldly wisdom. Her innocence sees chiefly innocence about her. Love is good; so give of its abundance. Share your love and your integrity and your passion for goodness with anyone that passes. Believe, always believe. Never be baffled when your giving turns out badly. When one receptacle is full, or when it is cracked and can take nothing from you, find another. . . . I love all that in you, Mother, though I do not understand it in the least. . . . I have no such belief to make of life a valiant struggle. I have nothing except a peevish will to continue.

And yet, I've liked my life intermittently. I've had much: all the sights and sounds of the theater; all the intellectual delights which I was born with the capacity to enjoy; all the sensual delights of singing and loving; all the striving of creative effort. And I've had close alliances. With Mother, first. When she was no longer right for me, with Stephanie. When she was gone, with Bruce. When he went away, with Mother again.

I should not think that life had cheated me if only I didn't have to wait, now, for death. The delay will demoralize me. I shall try to distract myself by writing fine, brave plays that will slosh about in muddy symbolism and be preoccupied with the subject of death. I have always been preoccupied with one subject at a time. Once it was the War. Then it was physical love. Now, all my plays will be called *The Dark Land* or *Behind the Curtain*. They'll be sloppy with fake philosophy, fake resignation, fake belief.

Actually, I shall be like a prisoner in the condemned block. One minute, I shall swagger with noisy defiance. The next, I shall beat on the bars with hysterical fright. Or I shall just be

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glum and stupid, all my perceptions becoming atrophied because they have nothing on which to nourish themselves.

If only, I didn't have to wait. . . .

Why should I wait? . . .

No, there is no reason. . . .

He rose, curiously comforted by the thought.

It was so easy, nowadays. You just cut a piece of hose, fitted it to the exhaust pipe, introduced it through the back window, closed the aperture with cloths, and waited. . . . You did not have to wait long.

Do it beautifully, as Hedda Gabbler had urged. Well, what could be better? You were found just sitting quietly, waiting. . . . But without pain . . . without the humiliating pain of a long, helpless sickness.

As he reached the door, he heard his name called.

"Joel! You haven't drunk your share. Good God, we don't want to have to stay here for a week, drinking ourselves out of this whisky-soaked morass."

He didn't want to say anything. People remembered what one had said, afterward. They made melodrama of the most casual utterance. Newspaper men, in particular, had the imaginations of cheap dramatists.

"Joel, you bum! You're going back to work, like a damn scab."

He turned.

"The hell with you guys. I'm going now."

Well, let the experts in last words make what they could of that.

He slammed the door behind him.

XII

(May, 1931)

FAITH lay on her bed, saying over and over to herself the words of the note that Joel had left. They had not let her keep it. In cases of suicide, they had said, the Coroner must preserve all the evidence for at least five years. They seemed deliberately to make every circumstance connected with his death as difficult as possible.

But she could see the words as though they were written in huge letters against the darkness of the room. Would she, she wondered, ever see anything else?

"Don't be unhappy. And don't let Bruce be. I'm elated. This is the right thing to do. Dr. Fielding will tell you why. I couldn't bear to see my life unravel before my eyes. I love you, Mother. More than ever. You are like the pure essence of belief to me."

How strange it was that the last line he would ever write to her should echo the first! Did he remember the valentine? "You are like a flower to me." Oh no, he could not have remembered. It was what he wanted to say to her.

Poor, tortured, lonesome, broken boy! She did not wish him back. He was right. He had done what he had to do. The Roman had fallen on his sword to save himself humiliation.

Only, he had not quite been saved. She would never forget the scene of the evening before. As she had walked up the street, she had seen the crowd near the garage door. It had not occurred to her to associate the excitement with herself. Not until she had seen Margaret detach herself from the knot of people and come toward her, limping on her arthritic legs. Then she had known. . . . But they would not let her go to Joel. The policeman, standing near the door, had said: "I wouldn't go in there, lady." He had his cap tipped on the back of his head and he rolled an unlighted cigar between his lips. Another policeman and some sort

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of official in plain clothes were taking notes from Kathie. . . . A moment before, these men must have stood over Joel. They had handled his body, with their caps on their heads and their cigars in their mouths.

The tears began to flow, as she remembered. This had been Joel's end which he had tried so hard to keep from shabbiness: a neighborhood scandal; people peering through half-closed doors to get a glimpse of his helplessness; the law, standing over him suspiciously, wearing dishevelled dress.

Faith remembered the nightmare that had come to her so many times since her streetcar accident. It was of a figure, lying on the ground while curious, malicious faces peered down from all sides. She had never been able to rid herself of the superstition that it foreshadowed a recurrence to herself of some humiliation like that of the old accident. But, now, the superstition was broken. A worse thing had happened. The figure had been Joel's.

Her mind began relentlessly piecing together all the circumstances that had culminated in Joel's death. For economy's sake, she had decided not to drive her car to town each day, but to use it only for week-end drives with Joel. If she had only used it that day, he could not have taken his life. . . . But no! that was wrong of her. That was to wish him back to suffer a long time and die slowly. Dr. Fielding had said that Joel's guess had been correct. He was doomed long ago. Joel had been right to choose a merciful death. . . . Yes, right, right!

She must think of only the charming things about him. Her memory was stored with so many! She would think of him as he sat, with tongue caught between lips, making the stiff-stemmed flowers of his valentine. Of the time when he had vaulted over the side of a box at the theater and dashed up the aisle to get a better view of the horses in *Ben Hur*. And of the way he had looked singing, *Whisper and I Shall Hear* at a choir concert. And of the earnest, preoccupied expression that he wore when he acted out his endless dramas in the side yard of the old house. And of the way his body felt in her arms when they sat before the fire, reading. And of the way his body felt, another time, when he came, so young and thin and eager, to tell her that

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he had enlisted. And of the smell of the lindens as she lay nursing him. And of the radiance in him that Buford, too, had seen. And of the feathery lightness of her heart when she knew that they had brought him safely through pneumonia. And of the cities that he had made with his blocks, all over the parlor rug, left there for days because he could not bear to part with his creations. And of all the lovely things that she could remember.

Perhaps, we live only in memory, she thought. . . . Then, I have you still, my darling, young and whole. I wouldn't want you back to limp, to part from people whom you love, to be disappointed again and again and again. . . . Yes, my dearest, you were right.

She heard the sound of voices at the door. Mrs. Veblen was leaving. Margaret was saying good-bye.

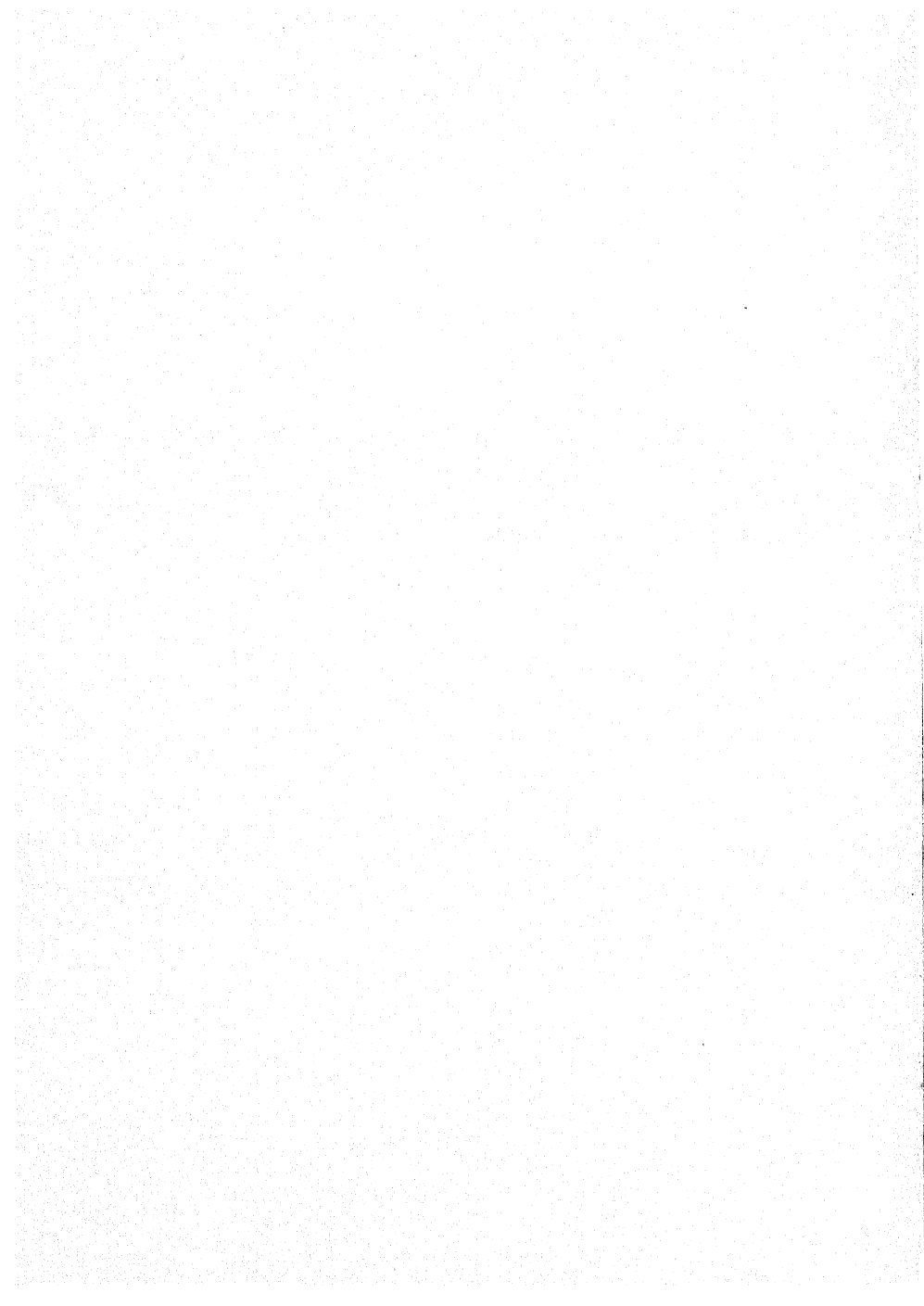
"You're sure she'll be all right?" Mrs. Veblen asked.

"Oh yes. She's sleeping soundly now. The doctor gave her a strong opiate. I'll watch her carefully. Someone will be with her all the time."

They think I'll take my life, too, Faith realized. How strange of them to imagine that!

"I do hope she'll be all right. When I heard about Joel, I said to myself: 'This will be the end of Lady Fraser.' But I've said that so many times. I said it when David Fraser was defeated and when he died and when Judith ran away and when Joel was wounded. You'd think, with all her nerves and intensity, she'd be very vulnerable. There are strong powers of resistance in the human spirit. . . ."

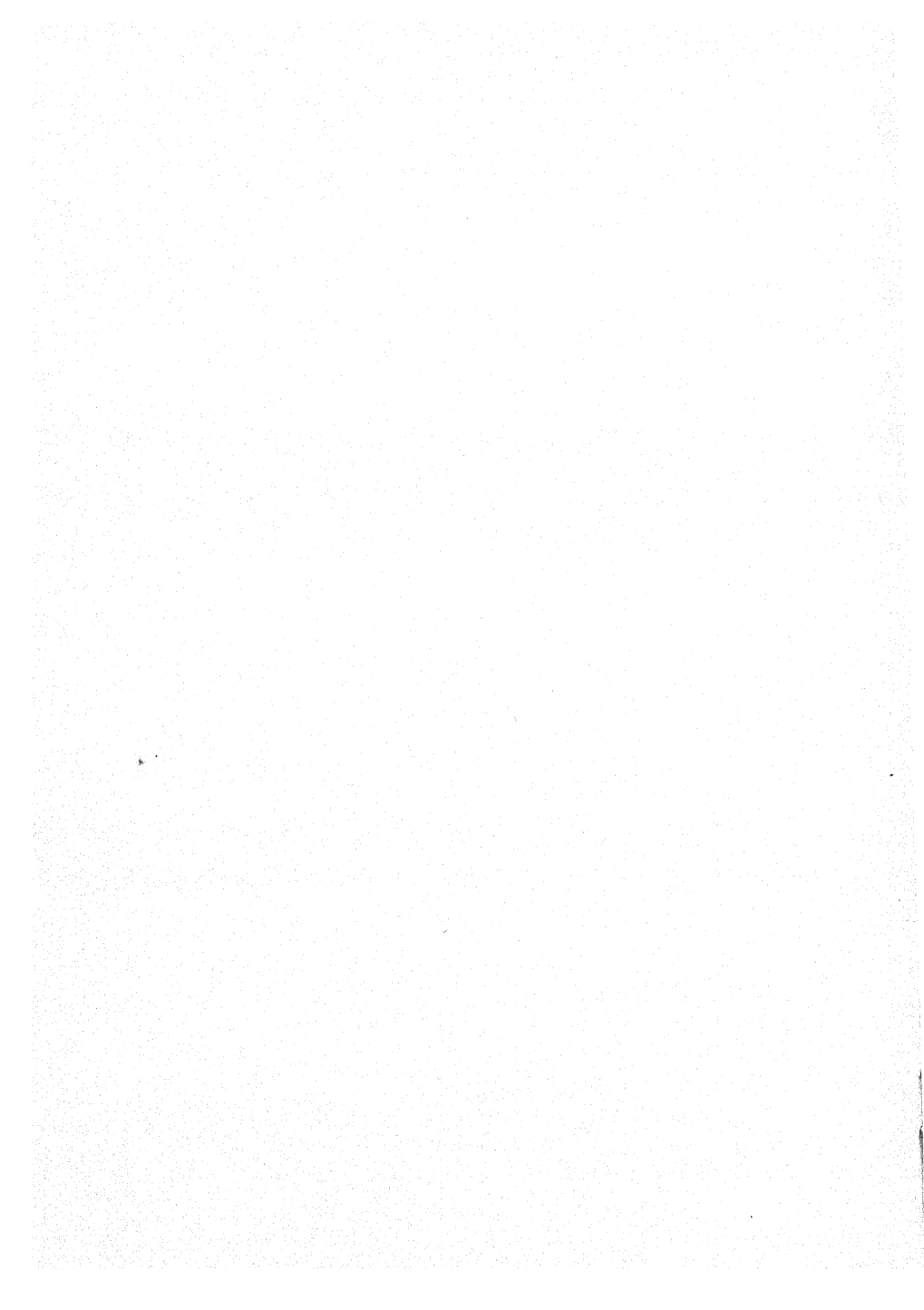
Oh no, Faith thought, it can't be the end. I have to live up, now, to what Joel wrote. The essence of belief! Yes, that was what she must remember. . . .



V

NIGHT-FALL

“And still, as darker grows the night. . . .”



I

(June, 1934)

BRUCE helped Nina into the cab and dropped wearily to the seat beside her.

"Golly, it's good to see you," he exclaimed. "I expect to have the hangover of the ages tomorrow. I've been helping the great picture-stealer from Hollywood entertain the press."

Nina laughed.

"What's she like after all these years of being America's jolly Aunt Emma?"

"Just about what you'd expect. Fun, though. When I told her the newspaper boys and girls had been calling, she said: 'Oh, the organized bastards!' But she said it with the elegant inflection of a Madame de Sévigné. Then she ordered up six bottles of Scotch and the same of Bourbon and went to work on them. I tell you it's wonderful! The mauve effulgence of her charm turns on and off with the automatic reliability of a Neon light."

"What about the precarious health that darkened her childhood . . . and ours . . . ?"

"Nina, you won't believe it, but the very first crack she made was about having just left the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital to come to my wedding. It seems she's been having more internal organs than I ever heard of dry-cleaned and pressed."

"Oh yes! I can believe only too well. Do you suppose she spends all her millions on treatments for hitherto undiscovered blights of the eye-lash?"

"Well, at least, it keeps her money in circulation."

Nina took his hand.

"Tell me about Mother."

"Gone on one of her trips. She'll be home tomorrow in time for the wedding. . . . I'm taking you to the Hotel Drummond. Mother keeps a room there by the year. I'm staying there, too."

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Living in splendor, for once. I usually go to the Jewel. The great lady from Hollywood has taken the pent-house, of course. She wants Mother to occupy it with her. She knows that Mother has a room of her own. But I think she has the notion that a mother makes a handy stage prop to have around. . . . I can just see Mother freezing up sternly on that little plan."

"How in the world do you suppose Judith happened to come?"

"She's combining the trip with a personal appearance tour. Handy, isn't it? You remember she couldn't afford to come to Joel's funeral."

"I remember. She was in the midst of one of her super-colossal pictures. . . . Did you know that Joel wrote damn well? I almost got one of his plays produced a year ago. The manager told me every day for six weeks that he'd never been so mad about a play. But, of course, he finally weakened because it seemed a little out-of-date. In the theater, ideas have to be chic, like hats."

"Joel would have liked the irony of that."

Nina suddenly leaned forward.

"That's the new courthouse, isn't it? Rather dashing and modern for Drummond, isn't it? Do you know I can remember just how the row of second-hand stores used to look in the old days. The bargains in gents' suitings used to flap across your path, as you walked along. I had no idea that Drummond had been so real to me, as a place . . . as brick and stone. . . ."

"Ah-hah! The return of the native. A new novel is being conceived before my slightly abashed eyes."

"What do you know about my books? I'll bet you've never read one of them."

"Oh, I'm practically illiterate. I never read anything, except labor publications and Dostoevski. Oh and once, when I was living in the deepest, darkest south and had quarrelled with a girl and was bored to death, I read a wild assortment of volumes from the Harvard Classics. They were in the hotel library and everyone thought I'd gone crazy when I asked to borrow them. I don't believe anyone had known before that they were real books."

"Maybe you'll like my next book. It isn't a novel at all. I've collaborated with a political scientist from Columbia on a study

of the dictatorships. He wanted his book really to reach the people with its plea for a renewed belief in the ideal of democracy. So I was called in to try to make his ideas intelligible to the layman. . . . Well, aren't you pleased that I've done something affirmative, at last?"

"Oh, I don't know. You eager liberals. . . ."

"Now, look here, Bruce Fraser! We liberals don't have to accept that patronizing superiority from anyone any more. We have something to fight for. It's at least as important as your religion. You hope to save the world through labor organization. But we have to save it first, or there'll be nothing left for you."

Bruce turned toward her, with amused surprise.

"Want to start a fight, do you?"

"Not right now," Nina laughed. "We'll have to talk about it for a couple of weeks sometime. Bring your bride east for a vacation and we'll fight like hell."

"Maybe we both better save our little punches for the guys that really need them."

"Well, just because you're a big, practical fellow in the labor movement, you can't make me feel futile. I like the way I feel too much. . . . Tell me about your girl, Bruce."

Bruce launched contentedly into the subject he had been longing to discuss.

"It's an incredible, school-boy romance, modern-style," he said. "I used to know Liz Webster a long time ago when she was Betty Sands. She married my best friend; got tired of playing bridge and flirting with people she's seen everyday since she was born; frugally studied psychiatry at George's expense; divorced him and decided that I'd got myself a pretty way of life, after all. We were dopey about each other as kids. . . . Superficially, there's all the difference between her, as she was and as she is, as between 'Betty' and 'Liz.' But I suspect that she's still wilful and undisciplined. She's hidden her old character beneath a glossy new, social feeling. She's the child of the age and the age requires her to go in for idealistic enterprise. . . . Liz was the first to point out that she may not be very deeply convinced of what she thinks she believes now. She has never made any personal sacrifice for

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her ideas. But we don't think there's any harm in trying. If it doesn't work, no one will be hurt much. Loving each other belongs to a youthful pattern that still seems charming to us. We'll try to fit it into our adult lives. If it won't stick, well, it won't stick, that's all. . . ."

Bruce felt his hand pressed tight in Nina's.

"Life was much simpler," she said, "for people whose emotions were mysterious to them. I sometimes wish that we had been allowed to remain quite blind. The little light we have doesn't shine very far along the path, does it? We fall on our silly faces just as hard. Weddings nowadays make me want to cry, just like a dear, old Victorian, not because the bride's lovely freshness will fade so soon, but because her Freudian convictions are about to be knocked for so many loops. . . . Well, bless you, my darling, I hope it will stick."

They stepped from the cab and went into the hotel. When Nina had registered, Bruce detained her.

"Don't go up to your room right away. Judith will start calling immediately and expect you to dash up to the pent-house. I want to tell you something about Mother."

"It's very noisy here in the lobby, Bruce."

"I know. There's a convention of taxidermists, or something, going on. But it will be quieter than your own room once Judith gets on your trail."

They found a secluded corner.

"Mother's in trouble," Bruce sighed. "She doesn't know it, but the depression has caught up with her. They want to let her out of the magazine. I had an oleaginous note from her publisher, asking me to call, the very next day after he had seen me in Mother's office. He said he had not spoken to Mother, but that they found it necessary to curtail expenses. They valued her work highly, and so forth and so forth; but they simply were not able to indulge themselves in it any longer. He knew that, since Mother's children were all full grown, they would be glad of the opportunity to care for her. A woman of her age, who had worked so hard, should retire anyway. Wasn't that my opinion? He obviously didn't give a damn what my opinion really was. There

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was a great deal more in that vein. But you get the idea. She's being fired as the just reward of many years' service."

"Give me a cigarette, Bruce. I suppose you realize that this is the worst possible news."

Her hand trembled as she leaned forward for a light.

"Yes, I know, Nina. In a strange way, it's the worst thing that has happened in all Mother's life. The last thing that remains for her. . . ."

"Would it do any good for me to see Mr. . . . whatever is his name?"

"Lambert. . . . No, he's a super boy-scout who knows that he has never done an evil thing in his life. Right now, he's basking pleasantly in the thought that he is doing the best possible thing for a tired woman. It matters not at all to him, of course, that he would be relegating her to uselessness. Nina, I think it would kill Mother."

"I'm afraid you don't realize how soon it might kill her."

"I know that she refuses ever to be dependent on any of her children. If there were the absolute necessity of accepting support, it would break her spirit."

"No, it wouldn't Bruce. Mother once said to me that when she couldn't work, she could die. She meant it. I've never been so appalled in my life. The words were spoken as casually as you or I might say: 'Let's have a drink.'"

Bruce saw that his own hand was trembling.

"Joel . . ." he murmured.

"Yes. . . . Mother has the same kind of grim fortitude. Joel took his life. So might Mother. We have to guard her against thinking that there is any such appalling necessity."

Nina rubbed out her barely touched cigarette and immediately reached for another.

"I'll see that man, anyway. I'll tell him that if he'll keep Mother on the staff and say nothing, I'll give him as many stories as he'll use . . . gratis."

Bruce felt the smart of tears in his eyes.

"I knew you'd feel that way. Only you mustn't take the whole responsibility. I'll tell you what I suggested to Lambert. I said that

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you and I and Judith would pay him, each month, enough to make up Mother's salary, if you would agree never to tell her."

"And he agreed to it, Bruce?"

"Oh, eagerly. Her stories have been very popular. He's delighted to have the work . . . for nothing."

"Bruce, I'm so relieved!"

And then her sense of escape from danger expressed itself in tears.

"You'll have to get me away from here before I disgrace us both. I'm sure the girl at the cigar counter thinks I'm your elderly mistress and that you're discarding me. . . . Let's walk around outside for a few minutes."

On the street, Nina said: "Why didn't you tell me, immediately, what you had arranged? I was very nearly sick with fright."

"I didn't want to bully you, Nina."

"You thought I didn't love Mother enough for that!"

"Please, Nina. You must forgive me. I knew there'd been a kind of antagonism between you."

"But that ended years ago. Mother's a strong, dominating creature! We've all had to fight her in order to be allowed to be ourselves. But I adore her. Mother knows that. Once, thank God, I was able to tell her."

"I didn't have to fight Mother," Bruce said. "I think she was never very much aware of me."

"No, you were the rejected child. But maybe it made things easier for you. But don't you know, Bruce, that all the while we were fighting Mother, we were Mother, just below the surface of our revolt?"

"How do you mean? I've never felt that I understood Mother. I don't even know what she means when she talks about the excellent life."

"Of course you do! We're all bursting with passion for the excellent life. You think it will come about through labor organization. I think it will come about through persuading people to reassert their faith in democracy. Joel thought it might be brought about through exposing the meanness and cruelty in the human heart and urging people to change. All of Joel's plays cried out,

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and even ranted a little, on just one theme: 'Oh world; be better for her sake!' More particularly than you or I, Joel meant for Mother's sake. But we are all what Mother made of us, by her faith and her example. Maybe, we're messy products of her teaching. I know that I have been a misshapen creature for years. But we are descended from a long line of zealots; and though we have tried to deny our ancestry, its characteristics have expressed themselves at last. . . . Grandfather Winchester wanted the excellent life. To him it meant having religious faith. Mother thinks that his belief wavered at the end of his life. If it did, that was because his experience bridged two periods, quite different in thought and feeling. Mother caught up his faith and gave it a new interpretation. To her the excellent life meant trying to create a world in which culture and learning and good works and delicate sensibility and poetry and world peace might flourish. . . . Grandfather saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' but his emphasis was on heaven. Mother wanted heaven, too; but she expected it to be a great ideal like the Elysian fields transferred to Drummond. Everyone was asked to forget his viciousness and engage in high, philosophical discourse. . . . You and I are obsessed with exactly the same desire, only we have sternly stricken out all reference to a new heaven. It's time someone thought a little about the earth, we say."

She caught Bruce's arm and hurried him along, as though her eagerness had some immediate object which she expected to find just at the end of the street.

"Don't you believe what I believe, Bruce? The story of faith in man is being told over in us, just as it was told in Mother. They are not very spectacular versions, of course; but they have their little importance, at least, in that they help to preserve the continuity of the tradition. There are people who forget that man began, quite unpromisingly, as a nasty little scavenging animal. He lived on food that was not good enough for his more fastidious and self-respecting neighbors in the jungle. He has managed to do himself over, from that dismal design, into a creature of imagination. . . . Mother has always been one of the people who believe, stubbornly, that the limits of his imagination have not yet

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been reached. She thinks, just as you do, that life can yet be made livable for the men and women to whom, in the past, it has been chiefly torment or ennui. . . . Mother has seen the human experience as a struggle for the preservation of principle. She spared herself no pain, no hunger, no humiliation in the unwavering search for excellence. Do you really think that anyone could have a better obituary?"

"She has been terribly unhappy, Nina . . . often because of her own mistakes."

"Of course, she's been unhappy and of course she has made mistakes. People who are impelled by idealism always do. They must accomplish and accomplish and accomplish. Not everything that they accomplish can possibly be right. Mother has never been calm, or well-balanced, or inspired by common sense, like Mrs. Veblen. She has disturbed the lives about her. She has even drawn them into tangles, as she did mine and Joel's. But her children have received from her their best inheritance: the faith that something can be done with the world. It's wonderful, Bruce, the way that belief survives all the confusion and passion and pity and misery of human life. And it always will."

She stopped short in her eager, plunging progress.

"I sound like a professional reformer, complete with soap-box. Let's go back and have a beer."

"Right!"

His hand reached out toward her's, as they walked.

"You know, Nina, I agree with you about Mother. She has had her excellent life, precisely because there has been pain and bleakness and suffering in it. No one with imagination can wish to escape the fate of other men. . . ."

II

(February, 1935)

FAITH had meant to put her room in order before she left on her trip. But there was scarcely any time left. The train could not be expected to wait while she classified her note-books and locked them away in the cabinet that Bruce had given her. She smiled at the thought of how shocked her son must have been by the look of her room. Every piece of furniture was piled almost to the ceiling with magazines and books. Bruce had tactfully suggested that she might clip her Manchester Guardians and file the articles she really wanted to keep. But he did not realize how little time she had. She was expected to be at least six people. There was very little leisure for any one of them.

There! Her brief-case was ready: note-books, pencils, the copy of Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas*. . . . All ready. . . .

Yes, she was at least six people. Six characters in search of someone to lead their lives. They did not merely search; they clamored. She was, first of all, a woman with a job. Then, she was a woman with children. Nina and Bruce expected weekly letters, and there had to be an occasional one to Judith. . . . Then, she was a member of the Scholar Gypsies who took the writing of papers with a grim sort of seriousness. After that—God help her!—she was a woman who sat on boards: the League of Women Voters, the Y.W.C.A., the Business and Professional Women's Club. . . . Next she was—where did that bring her on the list? one, two, three, four, five—an amateur student who tried to get through all the new books sent her every few months by Nina. And finally she was mother-confessor to all the derelicts whom she met on her trips.

The interval which she enjoyed most was that of being an amateur student. The children were inclined to be ironic at her expense because she took such copious notes. Bruce had asked

her if she expected to be personally examined by God in each subject. She did not let his amusement annoy her. After all, her little intellectual games did no one any harm. The children had their own curious ideas; about marriage, particularly. Judith had a third husband. Nina was separated from hers. Bruce had married a divorcée. If their mother could be tolerant toward them, they must manage to be tolerant toward her.

Bruce's irony was really amusing, though. Once when she had been telling about a production of *Uncle Vanya* that she had seen with Nina in New York, he had asked slyly whether anything about the character of the mother-in-law had suggested any particular resemblance. Thank heaven, she had had the presence of mind to answer: "Yes, you young wretch, I know I'm just like that old fool of a woman: reading endlessly and taking futile notes on all I read."

It was strange that Bruce should be her son. His very occupation was a mystery to her. . . . If she had been told twenty-five years ago that she would live to see herself the mother of a movie actress and a labor organizer she would have laughed at the idea. It seemed to her, even now, like something that had happened on the far side of Alice's looking-glass. . . . "Curiouser and curiouser!"

Somehow she couldn't help being proud of Bruce, in spite of his strangeness. He had developed poise and charm. He was David, all over again. Yes, David, but with something added. He had seriousness of purpose and he had principles. There was a kind of stubborn idealism in him. She saw it when he talked about the books that fired his enthusiasm. Bruce's reading was scattered. The gaps in his literary information would have been amusing, if they had not also been appalling. But what he read, he made his own. He talked about Dostoievski as though no one had ever heard of him before. But when he did so, a look of rapt devotion came into his eyes. It was beautiful to see. He identified himself with the Dostoievski characters: the murderers, the idiots, the maladjusted of all kinds. He really shared their plight. Perhaps he was just in his implied criticism of the wide superficiality of her own reading. Better one book, read with Bruce's kind of passionate con-

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centration, than many, read, annotated, and then dropped into the intellectual half-world of things, dimly remembered. But she was too old to learn new mental tricks. She would go on annotating to the end.

That reminded her! She must put her notes on Whitehead away. The Scholar Gypsies had done her a real service in making her concentrate on twentieth-century philosophy. With Whitehead, Dewey and Santayana, she had an exciting winter. . . . There! the notes were secure from the chambermaid. All maids seemed to have read the story of the splendid burning of Carlyle's *French Revolution*. They lived up to the noble tradition by destroying every bit of paper on which they could lay their hands, fervently hoping that it might prove to be irreplaceable. But she had defeated Mabel, this time.

While she had the trunk keys in her hands, she might as well put away the file of letters from the derelicts. They were such dismal, pathetic, lovable creatures! More than half the time when she was sent out on clues to find women who had succeeded, she discovered instead women who were nearly desperate over the effort to keep their families from starvation. Even the women who had reputations in political, professional, or business life were finding conditions, under the depression, nearly unendurable. When they talked of their careers, they soon branched off into the problems of their private lives. Sooner or later, the great majority of them relaxed from whatever fortitude or austerity upheld them. They confided and, then, they wept. When the interview was concluded, at last, they seemed to feel that, in her, they had found the only disinterested friend of a lifetime's searching.

It was pathetic that a whole group of the country's most able, self-respecting women should have to cry out to a stranger so desperately for a little faith. Even the women who were getting on well enough, as far as material comfort was concerned, had emotional deserts in their lives through which they trudged looking, with almost maddened thirst, for an oasis. There was the woman sculptor in Chicago who was so grateful for being advised to read Epictetus. And the woman in northern Minnesota, who was trying hard to keep her newspaper from degenerating into a

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propaganda sheet serving only the interests of the mine-owners: she had seemed to take heart from the sympathy that Faith was able to offer out of her own experience. . . . There were so many touching stories. A world of misery and fear and fortitude and defiance and yearning was revealed in these letters.

Faith had deliberately tried to be the oasis in their lives. She wanted to make them all feel successful, even the woman who operated a pathetic chicken ranch, who lived in a tar-party shanty, and who expected to be dispossessed of that, at any moment. They needed the assurance that the dignity of their effort, at least, had been recognized by a disinterested observer. They turned to her as though she were the direct representative of some supreme being, a creature with the right to judge their lives.

It made her feel humble to be invested with so much awful significance. But, more and more, she had come to believe that there was an obligation upon her to let these women see themselves, for a moment, as engaged in an heroic struggle where they fought valiantly. It had always been her gift to make people think well of themselves. Years ago, she had done it for John, and then for Beverly, and then for all of Nina's and Judith's young friends. Only with her own family did she seem to have failed. For David, she had created more problems than she had ever solved. Joel had resisted all her efforts to help him. The ones she had wanted most to comfort had run away from her, to help themselves in strange ways that she did not understand.

Now, all her close ties were broken. David and Joel were dead. And John and Margaret and Kathie. Her sisters had died, without regret, because everything for which they had held out their hands to life had been denied them. Hope had died in them first. With each of them, death had come quietly, like a sigh of relief. Never in their lives had they been close to anyone but Mamma. Their dying had begun with Mamma's death. How amazing it was that Faith herself should have had powers of resistance greater than Margaret and Kathie, both of whom, in their early years, had seemed to burst with vitality! Margaret's radiant beauty and Kathie's restless greed had reflected not strength, but passivity. They had accepted defeat and gone down easily before it.

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And John. He had been defeated, too. Life demanded toughness.

It imposed one chief duty. When Prometheus stole fire for mankind, he left to each member of the race the obligation to guard the gift and value it. Not everyone could make the fire blaze very high or burn very bright. But if he kept the fire of belief in man's destiny from going out, perhaps he had accomplished a humble service.

She thought again of Bruce. Though he said nothing, she knew that he was critical of her work. Once she had described to him the way her women responded pathetically to praise. "It's like administering supreme unction to the dying, isn't it?" he had commented.

He said it almost as though it were a rebuke. That was because he had the notion that the world was held back from a real cure by the palliative drugs administered to its diseases. He was young and stern. He seemed not to remember that the world has gone on a long, long time; that its ills could not be cured all in a moment; that pain is immediate and terrifying; that it needs something beside the heroic treatment offered by a theorist. Bruce was of Spartan stock. He would expose sick children on a rock to die, hoping to develop a sturdier race. . . . Well, the Bruces of the world were welcome to their problems. There was nothing that she could do except a little casual nursing. Inadequate as it might be, the people to whom it was offered did not regard it with contempt.

Almost defiantly, she took, from the parcel of letters, a handful to be answered on the train. These were from some of the most pathetic of the Derelict Sisters.

They would not like her name for them. But the phrase applied to herself as aptly as to any of them. Perhaps what she nursed in them was her own failure. She, too, needed to think well of herself. There was no one left to believe in her. She could nourish her need only by nourishing the needs of others.

Well, no more dawdling, no more dawdling, she warned herself. Was everything she would need put into her hand bag? . . . Check book; fountain pen; cash for immediate expenses. Yes. . . .

She called a taxi and stepped to the mirror to put on her hat. She was glad that she had let herself grow old. The mask of resolution was gone, along with the cosmetics. The gray in her hair made it look dull. Yes, she was definitely old and rather mousey. Only no mouse ever had such a nose. She must still live up to her nose.

Thank heaven, she was no longer under any obligation to be chic. If Mrs. Veblen were alive she could not say that Lady Fraser looked like an elderly Flora Dora girl.

Mrs. Veblen's death had been curiously appropriate to her temperament. She had always been on the side of progress. To die in an airplane accident was somehow the right sort of end for her. She had been on her way to Washington for a reunion with the suffragists among whom she had worked in the old days. When the news came back to Drummond, it was announced at a symphony concert. The entire audience had risen, not at any suggestion from the stage, but moved by a spontaneous impulse of respect.

Faith missed Mrs. Veblen. She had been always a fountain of common sense, sparkling with humor, illuminated by good-will. But her excellencies were not lost. Her children possessed them. Nothing good ever disappears, she thought. . . . The fountain plays on and on, fed by inexhaustible springs.

She must get her things together. Travelling bag, one; hand bag, two; muff, three; glasses, four; brief-case, five. . . .

Now, she really must go. It was good to be busy; good to have interests; good to have work to do. . . .